

MAITREYA'S



Distinguishing
DHARMA & DHARMATA

KHENCHEN THRANGU RINPOCHE

Distinguishing DHARMA AND DHARMATA

by
MAITREYA

with commentary by
THE VENERABLE KHABJE
KHENCHEN THRANGU RINPOCHE

Zhyisil Chokyi Ghatsal Charitable Trust
Publications

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Namo Buddha Publications
P. O. Box 1083
Crestone, CO 81131
Phone: (719) 256-5367
E-mail: cjohnson@ix.netcom.com
Visit Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche's web site: www.rinpoche.com

and

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Note

Technical words have been italicized the first time that they are used to alert the reader that they may be found in the Glossary of Terms. The Tibetan words are given as they are pronounced, not spelled in Tibetan.

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The Twelfth Tai Situpa

Foreword

The great Indian Mahapandita Arya Asanga, due to his great aspiration and realization, was able to communicate directly with Arya Maitreya, Buddha Shakyamuni's regent and the future Buddha. From this encounter, the Five Great Shastras of Maitreya came into this world, which I am delighted to know are being published by Zhyisil Chokyi Ghatsal Publications under Venerable Lama Shedrup.

These great teachings from Maitreya constitute one of the major foundations of the bodhisattva path, providing teachings on both the relative and ultimate truths and elucidating the second and third turnings of the Wheel of Dharma, the Prajnaparamita and Tathagatagarbha.

In order to understand the profound and vast meaning of these texts, one of my own philosophy teachers, the erudite Kagyu scholar and supreme abbot of the lineage, Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, through his great wisdom and compassion has elucidated these texts with profound clarity and simplicity.

I pray that these publications, which give a clear understanding of the Teachings of Lord Buddha, guide limitless sentient beings swiftly to supreme enlightenment.

Yours in The Holy Dharma



The Twelfth Kenting Tai Situpa
5 December 2003

Venerable Choje Lama Karma Shedrup Cho Gyi Senge Kartung

Preface

It is with great joy that Zhyisil Chokyi Ghatsal now offers this second edition in our series on the five great works of Arya Maitreya – *The Changeless Nature* (*The Uttaratantrashastra*), a treatise on Buddha-Essence; *The Ornament of Clear Realization* (*Abhisamayalankara*), a text on the Prajnaparamita; *Differentiating the Middle from the Extremes* (*Madhyantavibhaga*), a text on the Middle-way school; *Differentiating Dharma and Dharmata* (*Dharmadharmatavibhaga*), a text also discussing the Buddha-essence; and *The Ornament of the Mahayana Sutras* (*Mahayanasutralankara*).

These works, transmitted from Arya Maitreya – the fifth and future Buddha of this fortunate age – to Arya Asanga some time in the third century, comprise one of the major foundations of Mahayana Buddhism, the unbroken transmission and practice of which continues today.

As is mentioned in the text: "*Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata* is a text that is very brief and direct in its presentation and is included within the class of oral instructions. It is a work which clearly portrays the character of nothing less than non-conceptual original wisdom, the point of utmost profundity within the Mahayana.

With regard to meditation, there are the particular traditions, views and practices of Mahamudra and Dzogchen, the basis of which are the teachings of the Buddha and the commentaries or shastras on those by the great masters. In order to achieve the high view of

Mahamudra or Dzogchen we need to cut our doubts, hinderances and aberrations, which is accomplished by listening to and contemplating the Mahayana dharma.

Realizing dharmata or the nature of mind is what is to be known and this we understand through hearing and thinking about it. Nevertheless, due to the obstruction of conventional appearances we are not able to realize this. If we can realize this profound nature then we will naturally separate from confusion and conventional appearances. Thus, this text, *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata*, is devoted to identifying exactly what is conventionally true and what is ultimately true. So this text is extremely important for all those who wish to practice the meditations of Mahamudra and Dzogchen."

Through the great blessing of the Kagyu lineage, in particular through His Eminence Tai Situ Rinpoche, an emanation of Maitreya, and Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche we have produced these works for publication in order that they be available worldwide for dharma students. We pray that through this all beings swiftly accomplish enlightenment and that it be a cause for the long life and the flourishing activity of the great masters.

Lama Karma Shedrup
Auckland, NZ
20 July 2004

KHENCHEN THRANGU RINPOCHE (b. 1933)

A Brief Biography

The lineage of the Thrangu Rinpoche incarnations began in the fifteenth century when the Seventh Karmapa, Chodrak Gyatso, visited the region of Thrangu in Tibet. At this time, His Holiness Karmapa established Thrangu monastery and enthroned Sherap Gyaltsen as the First Thrangu Rinpoche, recognizing him as the re-established emanation of Shuwu Palgyi Senge, one of the twenty-five great siddha disciples of Guru Padmasambhava.

Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche is the ninth incarnation of this lineage and was born in Kham, Tibet in 1933. When he was four, His Holiness the Sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa and Palpung Situ Rinpoche recognized him as the incarnation of Thrangu Tulku by prophesying the names of his parents and the place of his birth.

Entering Thrangu monastery, from the ages of seven to sixteen he studied reading, writing, grammar, poetry and astrology, memorised ritual texts, and completed two preliminary retreats. At sixteen, under the direction of Khenpo Lodro Rabsel, he began the study of the three vehicles of Buddhism while staying in retreat.

At twenty-three he received full ordination from the Karmapa. When he was twenty-seven, Rinpoche left Tibet for India at the time of the Communist invasion. He was called to Rumtek, Sikkim, where the Karmapa had his seat in exile. At thirty-five, he took the geshe examination before 1500 monks at Buxador monastic refugee camp in Bengal, and was awarded the degree of Geshe Lharampa. On his return to Rumtek he was named Abbot of Rumtek Monastery and the Nalanda Institute for Higher Buddhist Studies at Rumtek. He has been the personal teacher of the four principal Karma Kagyu

tulkus: Shamar Rinpoche, Situ Rinpoche, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche.

Thrangu Rinpoche has travelled extensively throughout Europe, the Far East and the United States. He is the abbot of Gampo Abbey, Nova Scotia, and of Thrangu House, Oxford, in the United Kingdom. In 1984 he spent several months in Tibet where he ordained over 100 monks and nuns and visited several monasteries. He has also founded Thrangu Tashi Choling Monastery in Boudhnath, a retreat centre and college at Namo Buddha east of the Kathmandu Valley, and has established a school in Boudhnath for the general education of lay children and young monks. He also built Tara Abbey in Kathmandu. In October of 1999 he consecrated the college at Sarnath which will accept students from the different traditions of Buddhism and will be open to Western students as well.

Thrangu Rinpoche, a recognised master of Mahamudra meditation, has given teachings in over twenty-five countries and is especially known for taking complex teachings and making them accessible to Western students. More recently, because of his vast knowledge of the dharma, he was appointed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to be the personal tutor for the recently escaped Seventeenth Karmapa.

Outline of the Root Text

Distinguishing
Dharma and Dharmata
The Root Text

In Sanskrit: dharmadharmatavibhagakarika
In Tibetan: chos dang chos nyid rnam par 'byed pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa

To the guardian Maitreya we bow in supplication.

2. Something there is to be given up fully through knowing
And something else which can only be actualized,
Because of which this treatise has been composed
With the wish to distinguish the traits defining these.

3. A summary of everything in brief
Should be known to include the following two motifs,
Since everything can be summarized fully in terms
Of phenomena together with pure being.

4. That which is classified here as phenomena
Is samsara; that which is classified precisely
As pure being is nirvana, transcendence of grief,
As this is defined by the vehicles, which are three.

The root text is reprinted with permission from *Maitreya's* Distinguishing Phenomena and Pure Being *with Commentary by Mipham*, under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, translated by Jim Scott; Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2004.

5. Here the traits of phenomena are defined
As duality plus assumption and formulation,
Whose appearance is the mistaken conceptual process,
Since what appears is not and is thus not real.
No referents have ever existed either
And, being but concept, consist of conceptualization.

6. The other factor, pure being, is defined
As suchness, in which there is no differentiation
Between a factor perceived and a perceiver,
A signifier contra a signified.

7. Because what does not exist appears, delusion
Provides the cause for completely afflicted states;
Since things like illusory elephants appear,
Even what does exist does not appear.

8. If either the lack of existence or the appearance
Were missing, delusion and freedom from delusion
And likewise states afflicted in every respect
And thorough refinement would be unjustified.

9. These two are not one and the same nor do they differ,
Because, between that which exists and that which does not,
A distinction exists and yet does not exist.

10. Because it provides a thorough introduction
To their characteristics as well as their rationale,
Their neither being the same nor different,
The ground in common and not in common shared,
And the lack of appearance involving perceiver-perceived,
This six-point approach to phenomena is the best.

11. Of these, the defining traits and the rationale,
As well as the lack of sameness and difference,
Are just as these were demonstrated in brief.

12. As long as there is someone circling somewhere,
These are the grounds in each and every case –
The constituents of beings and those of the vessel.
The constituents of the vessel appear to be shared,
The awareness being the common experience;
Some of the constituents of beings
Are experienced in common and some are not.

13. Further, birth and conventions, to nurture, subdue,
Benefit, harm, excellent features and faults
Are mutually caused by way of an interchange,
Because of which these are experience shared in common.

14. Since the ground and awareness, happiness, suffering,
Action, transition at death, captivity, birth,
And liberation are not observed in common,
They comprise the realm of experience not shared in common.

15. What appear to be outer, perceivable in common,
Are perceiving awareness; they are not referents
Existing as something extrinsic to consciousness,
Precisely because they are common experiences.

16. The counterpart is the one in which what is perceived
Is not shared in common. Here awareness' referent
Is the minds and so on associated with others.
These do not comprise an object of mutual exchange
For perceiving awareness not resting nor resting poised,
Because, for those not resting in equipoise,
It is but their own conceptions that appear;
And because, for those who are resting in equipoise,
It is its faithful reflection that appears
As the object encountered during samadhi absorption.

17. If what appears as perceived does not exist,
Whatever appears as perceiver does not exist;
Due to this, there is also a rationale
Behind the breakthrough to freedom from this appearance
Of perceived and perceiver, because without beginning
A volatile state prevails; and because duality's
Not existing at all is what really exists.

18. Through introducing traits and a ground at all times,
Definitive verification as well as encounter,
Recollection and immersion into its core,
This six-point approach to pure being is unsurpassed.

19. The defining traits in brief are just as they are.

20. The ground consists of the whole of phenomena
And supreme teachings, the whole of the sutra collections.

21. The term "definitive verification of this"
Refers to the whole of the path of application,
Comprised of appropriate mental cultivation
Based on the sutra collections of Mahayana.

22. The encounter attained because of authentic view
Is the path of vision, on which the suchness attained
Is in a fashion direct, whatever experienced.

23. Although reality *has* been seen by awareness,
Recollection – the path of meditation,
Comprised of factors inducing enlightenment –
Is needed to eliminate the stains.

24. Here, immersion into its core complete,
Is suchness rendered free of any stain,
Where all appear exclusively as suchness –
And this completes the transformation as well.

25. This ten-point presentation of transformation
Provides an unsurpassable introduction,
Because it is the way to approach the essence,
Ingredients and individuals,
The special traits, requirements and ground,
Mental cultivation and application,
The disadvantages and benefits.

26. The essence of transformation is introduced
As suchness freed of stain, and what that means
Is superficial stains appear no longer
And that which manifests is now the suchness.

27. To introduce the ingredients, or contents:
Awareness in the form of the vessel shared
Undergoes a transformation to suchness;
The sutras undergo a transformation
Into the suchness, the actual dharmadhatu;
And beings' awareness-components not shared in common
Undergo a transformation to suchness.

28. The approach as related to individuals:
The first two of these are transformations to suchness
Pertaining to Buddhas as well as to bodhisattvas;
The last of these pertains additionally
To Shravakas as well as Pratyekabuddhas.

29. The introduction to traits especially advanced
Pertains to Buddhas as well as to bodhisattvas:
The distinguishing trait of totally pure domains;
That which is gained through attaining the dharmakaya;
Sambhogakaya; as well as nirmanakaya –
The insight, instruction, and consummate mastery –
Are attainments distinctively greater comparatively.

30. The introduction to realizing what is required:
The distinguishing factor of previous wishing prayers;
The distinguishing factor of Mahayana teaching
As focal point; and the further distinguishing factor
Of effective application to all ten levels.

31. The introduction involving the ground or support
Is into original non-conceptual wisdom
As this is approached in a manner involving six points,
Since the focal requirement, attributes surrendered,
The correct way to apply the mind in practice,
The defining characteristics and benefits,
And full understanding are hereby introduced.

32. The first of these, the focal requirement,
Should be known to be introduced in four points,
Since what is required is Mahayana teachings,
Commitment to these, along with certitude
And fully completing the two accumulations.

33. The second, which treats of surrendering attributes,
Is also introduced by way of four points,
Since what is unfavorable and the remedies,
The suchness as well as the realization of this
Are attributes whose surrender leads the way.
By doing this in respective order as follows –
The coarse and the middling followed by those which are fine,
And those which persist for a very long time indeed –
These attributes are surrendered entirely.

34. The introduction to practicing wisdom correctly
Entails the following four specific aspects:
Practice involving something to focus on;
Practice involving nothing to focus on;
Practice involving no subject to focus on;
Practice whose focus is nothing to focus on.

35. The defining characteristics here encountered
Should be known to consist of the following three aspects,

36. Since one effect is repose in pure being,
Which means that one actually settles in pure being,
The non-dualistic and inexpressible;

37. And one effect relates to appearances' absence,
Where duality, assumption and formulation,
Faculties, objects, principles of awareness,
And vessel-like worlds' appearances are absent;
So these correspond to there being no observation,
No description, no ground and no appearances,
No principles of awareness, and no place,
Which is how the sutras express the traits
Defining original non-conceptual wisdom;

38. And one effect relates to appearances' presence,
Since experience of every phenomenon
Is equivalent to the center of open space,
And formations all are appearances like illusions.

39. The four points introducing the benefits
Include the complete attainment of dharmakaya,
Attainment of bliss which nothing can exceed,
Attainment of mastery over the power of insight,
And attainment of mastery over the power to teach.

40. The introduction to thorough understanding
Should be known to include the following four points:
A full understanding regarding the remedy;
A full understanding regarding the characteristic;
A full understanding regarding distinctive marks;
And a full understanding regarding the five effects.

41. What is to be understood as the remedy here
Is non-conceptualizing original wisdom,
Since perceiving phenomena, individuals,
An alteration as well as dichotomy,
Denial as well, when this is entertained,
Are five distinct forms of perception of non-existents
For which it is taught to comprise the remedy.

42. Fully understanding the characteristic:
A lack of the process of thought and correct transcendence,
Tranquilization, things in their composition,
And predetermination are the five
The exclusion of which is the concrete characteristic.

43. Completely understanding its marks refers
To its being free of conceptualization as such,
To the fact that it is not transitional,
To its not remaining while being there all along,
And its hallmark of being completely unexcelled;
These make up its five distinctive marks.

44. The last, the full understanding of its effects,
Includes its lasting effect on conceptualization;
Its affording unsurpassable happiness;
Its effecting elimination of obscurations –
Afflicted emotions and cognitive obscurations;
The original wisdom attained in the wake of this
Provides the access to every aspect of knowledge;
It enables achieving attunement with Buddha-fields
And thorough maturation of sentient beings,
And brings about revelation and transmission
Of knowledge which is complete in every aspect;
These five are the special features of the effects.

45. The introduction to mental cultivation:
For individuals wishing to cross the threshold
Into original non-conceptual wisdom,
For any bodhisattva, Awakening Hero,
Here is how to cultivate the mind.

46. By virtue of one's ignorance of suchness
The "store of all seeds" of what is unreal, mere invention,
Is the cause for two which do not exist to appear;
And, with that as the base, there are grounds for diversification,
Due to which the cause and effects as well,
In spite of appearing, still do not exist.
With that appearing, pure being does not appear;
Through that not appearing, pure being indeed appears.
Through such cultivation of mind, when properly done,
The Bodhisattva steps across the brink
Into original non-conceptual wisdom.

47. Through focusing thus, mere awareness is focused on,
Through which there *are* no referents to focus on;
Through there being no referents that could be focused on,
There is no such mere awareness to focus on;
Through that not existing on which to focus, the verge
Is crossed into focusing free of this twofold division;

48. No split into two existing on which to focus,
This is original non-conceptual wisdom,
Since this is what is defined with the utmost precision
As that which involves no object, no focusing,
No attributes on which to focus at all.

49. The penetration of levels through application
Should be known to entail the following four steps:
Through intense application involving informed commitment,
The stage where training is done through informed commitment
Comprises the step of definitive verification.
To connect with superior, first-hand realization
Is the first of the levels, the stage the precise is encountered.

50. Through intense application employing meditation,
The impure levels followed by those which are pure
Are what comprise the stage of recollection.
Through application involving final perfection,
The spontaneous deeds of a Buddha continually flow;
Hence this is the stage of immersion into the core.

51. The introduction to disadvantages
Includes the four which would follow as a result
Of there being no transformation; namely, the flaw
That preventing afflictions' entry would lack a support;
The flaw of the path's introduction lacking support;
The flaw of there being no basis of imputation
For speaking of individuals reaching nirvana;
As well as the flaw of no basis of imputation
For distinctions between three forms of enlightenment.

52. The introduction to the benefits
Should be known to include these four, but in the reverse.

53. To show how phenomena not existing appear,
They are likened to dream and compared to illusion and so on;
To illustrate the total transformation,
To space it is likened, to gold and water and so on.

54. The verses distinguishing phenomena and pure being composed by the guardian Maitreya are herewith concluded.

55. The Kashmiri Khenpo Mahadzana and the Tibetan translator Lotsawa Gelong Senge Gyaltsen collaborated in translating this [from Sanskrit into Tibetan] and in correcting their work, thus providing this finalized version.

Distinguishing
DHARMA AND DHARMATA
The Commentary



MIPHAM RINPOCHE'S GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO
Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata

To the one who has conquered the mountain,
perceived and perceiver,
With the vajra, original non-conceptual wisdom,
Thus gaining the inconceivable wisdom body;
To the Teacher Supreme, the Mighty Sage, I bow.

The Heir of the Victor, Manjushri, as well as The Regent –
The tenth-level Lord, the Invincible Maitreya –
Hold the treasures of Dharma both vast and profound.
The nails of their feet are the jewels I support as my crown.

That which will here be explained is the glorious shastra
Elucidating profound reality –
Original non-conceptual wisdom, the heart
Of Mahayana dharma's abundance of treasures.

That Heir of the Victor, the noble Asanga, performed the practice of the beloved master of loving kindness, Maitreya, for what – measured in human time would be – twelve years, at the end of which he beheld him face to face. As a result he was transported to the Joyous God-realm, Tushita, where he was presented with five works which include the two Ornaments, the two Distinctions, and *The Uttaratantra*,[1] which are treatises serving as commentaries on the purport of the teaching of the Victor in its entirety.

There are some scholars who consider all five as constituting a single co-ordinated treatise, while others refute this assertion on the grounds of the disagreement in their presentation of the ultimate on such points as there being one or *three vehicles* from the perspective of the *definitive meaning*.

Our own tradition considers them to be commentaries on the intent of the separate levels of the teaching, taking the first [*The Ornament of Clear Realization*] and last [*The Uttaratantra*] as commentaries on the thought of the *Madhyamaka*, the middle three [*The Ornament of the Mahayana Sutras, Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes* and *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata*] on that of the *Cittamatra*.

There are also some who consider *The Ornament of Mahayana Sutras* alone to be a work of the Cittamatra, the other four to be Madhyamaka texts. There are some who consider *The Ornament of Clear Realization* to be Madhyamaka and the other four Cittamatra; still others who locate all five within the thinking of the Cittamatra; and others who consider all five to belong within the thought of the Madhyamaka, and so on.

What can nevertheless be indisputably established is that *The Ornament of Clear Realization* is a commentary on the *Prajnaparamita* in the context of the middle level of the teaching; and that *The Uttaratantra* is a commentary on the sutras presenting the Buddha-essence, which belongs to the definitive meaning associated with the final turning;[2] and that both of these texts propose but one family[3] and one vehicle ultimately, which is in accord with the thinking of the Madhyamaka.

The Ornament of the Mahayana Sutras differs from the above two mentioned texts with respect to the sutra topics it explains. It is a commentary which compiles into one volume the topics of the majority of the sutras. On the whole, such factors as its lacking a decisive presentation of the single family and vehicle clearly indicate this text is primarily a commentary on the thought of the sutras associated with the Cittamatra.

The two Distinctions [*Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata* and *Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes*] teach the vast as well as the profound dimensions of the [Mahayana] vehicle in general. Even though these [two texts] extensively teach the three natures[4] and the sense in which outer objects do not exist, this in itself does not restrict them to being works of the Cittamatra alone. Thinking of the Madhyamaka could also be interpreted in terms of such dharma terminology without incurring a contradiction. In the *Lankavatara* sutra such terms are taught as general headings applicable to the whole of the Mahayana path, as follows:

> *The five prevailing themes*[5] *and natures three,*
> *Along with the eight-fold collection of consciousness*
> *And the pith in the two forms of lack of self-entity –*
> *Throughout the Mahayana these are found.*

This is also explicitly illustrated by *The Sutra Requested by Maitreya* which clarifies the intent of the "Mother,"[6] [and therefore a Madhyamaka text] where such dharma terms as "the three essentials (natures)" and so on are taught without there being a single categorical statement or logical argument which would necessarily amount to asserting true existence for the consciousness empty of dualism as this is asserted in the works of the Cittamatra.[7] There is therefore no error whatsoever in classifying [the two Distinctions] as commentaries which do not fall into any specific school of the [Mahayana], but apply to the whole vehicle in general.

Moreover, precisely because they follow the style exhibited by such major works, *Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes* is a work teaching the vast aspect, (meaning the stages of the paths of all three

vehicles) and *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata* is a work which, commensurate with the way in which the Yogacarya-Madhyamaka[8] unites the *two truths*, conclusively portrays the very heart of the theme found in all sutra collections treating of the profound, namely, non-conceptual original wisdom.

It is precisely for this reason, and due to their extraordinary profundity, that the manuscripts of this present work and of *The Uttaratantra* were bound with a seal of secrecy during the Indian period and later in that period disappeared from circulation. It was at that time that the mighty lord Maitripa, on discovering light emerging from a crack in a *stupa*, extracted the manuscripts of *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata* and *The Uttaratantra* and disseminated them anew. Therefore, while Shama Lotsawa Senge Gyaltsen was studying *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata* and preparing his translation of it, his learned teacher emphasized its significance by giving him only one page at a time with the admonition, "Beware that no harm befalls this! It is a text which is rarely available, because it is bound with a seal. Its disappearance would be tantamount to the body of the beloved master of loving kindness, Maitreya, passing from this world into *nirvana*."

Since what it teaches is profound reality, which is the critical secret embodied within the view, and because the realization of such a view is required of all practitioners of the Mahayana, there is no incongruity in interpreting it from the perspective of either the Madhyamaka or the Cittamatra systems. Nevertheless, even given that such texts as the Prajnaparamita sutras are interpreted in the works of individual Cittamatra and Madhyamaka preceptors in accordance with their respective schools, their ultimate purport rests with the Madhyamaka. Similarly, even though there are scholars in whose treatises also this present work is interpreted according to the Cittamatra, since this is relevant to a specific level of mental development, there is no contradiction in explaining it. Nevertheless, it is in fact a work which clearly portrays the character of nothing less than non-conceptual original wisdom, the point of the utmost profundity within the Mahayana, for which reason it serves as a commentary applicable in general to any sutra treating of the profound.

Since it accords with the Cittamatra in the form its assertions take with respect to the phenomenal world, which constitutes apparent reality, and since it accords with the Madhyamaka in its interpretation of dharmata, which constitutes genuine reality, it demonstrates the key points of the Mahayana view by uniting the Cittamatra and the Madhyamaka, while its ultimate purport rests with the Madhyamaka. To understand and explain it in this way covers the entire range of implication afforded by this great treatise.

Chapter One
An Introduction to the Text

I. An Introduction to the Treatise

A. The Meaning of the Title

1. In Sanskrit: dharmadharmatavibhagakarika.
In Tibetan: chös dang chös nyid nam par 'byed pa'i tsig le'ur byas pa.

This text is an exposition of the *Dharmadharmatavibhaga* in Sanskrit or *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata.* The word *dharma* means "phenomena" and *dharmata* means "pure phenomena." This treatise or *shastra* was given by the Regent of the Victorious One, Maitreya and is known as one of *The Five Treatises of Maitreya.* These treatises by Maitreya are important Buddhist texts of the *Middle-way* (Skt. *Madhyamaka*) and learned scholars of India and Tibet have debated the meaning of these texts in great detail and at length.

How This Text Was Written[9]

There is a Tibetan scholar named Kanga Tsultrim who wrote a book in which he argued that this text did not come from the Buddha Maitreya but by a human being whose name was Maitreyanatha and that Asanga received this text from him. My own opinion is simply that this person is overly involved with logic and has no confidence in dharma and no confidence in the existence of the pure realm of Tushita where Asanga received Maitreya's teachings. So he wrote this from the point of view of having little faith and confidence in the dharma. However, Maitreya did give these texts directly to Asanga. He taught them explicitly and that is well known to a great many *panditas* and *siddhas* who have also received such a direct transmission of knowledge.[10] In fact, Asanga went to the heaven of Tushita and received this text from Maitreya.

At the time of Asanga, the principal place for the study of the dharma in India was the Nalanda monastic university. A short time previous to Asanga's birth a great fire had broken out at Nalanda and destroyed many books, in particular, the texts of the *Abhidharma*. It was not possible to repair that damage right away so a nun called Tsawai Tsultrim thought, "I won't be able to refurbish and spread this teaching by myself. I could, however, give up the nun's life and give birth to sons who would be able to study these teachings, that would allow for the restoration of the Abhidharma teachings." She did so and gave birth to two sons: Asanga, whose father came from royalty, and Vasubhandu, whose father came from the Brahmin cast. These brothers spread the Buddhist teaching widely and, in particular, the teachings of the *Abhidharma*.

According to the tradition of the time, a son took up the work that his father had done. So at a certain point, the two sons of the former nun Tsawai Tsultrim asked her, "Who are our fathers? What work do they do? We want to prepare for the work that our fathers do." The mother replied to them, "Taking up the livelihood of your father is not the purpose of your being here, rather the purpose for your being here is to train in the Abhidharma teachings. A great deal of harm has come to these teachings and they have been damaged

and have practically disappeared. So that they won't disappear completely, you need to study and teach them. That is the reason why you are here."

The younger son, Vasubhandu, went to study with a Kashmiri teacher called Gendün Tsabmo and received the teachings on the Abhidharma of the lesser vehicle or the *Hinayana*, which is often now called the Theravada tradition.[11] There is also the greater vehicle or Mahayana and the views and teachings of the Mahayana go further than the Hinayana. For that reason, the elder son, Asanga, practiced meditation diligently trying to meet Maitreya so that he would be able to spread these very profound teachings of the Mahayana. Eventually Asanga was able to meet Maitreya and returned to the central country and spread the teachings there.

So the two sons did what their mother had requested of them. Asanga went into retreat and practiced for twelve years to achieve a direct transmission from Maitreya. During these twelve years he endured much hardship. On several occasions he became discouraged and lost confidence and broke his retreat only to return to it again. However, arousing his confidence and courage again, he was able to continue his practice for twelve years and at the end he met face-to-face with the Maitreya Buddha. He then went to Tushita with Maitreya and there listened to the oral instructions of the Maitreya Buddha. From listening to these oral instructions, Asanga received what are known as *The Five Works or Treatises of Maitreya*. This text known as *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata* is one of these five texts.

Mahamudra

Generally speaking, Tibet is renowned throughout the world as being the home of the secret *mantra Vajrayana*[12] teachings. However, not only was the Vajrayana taught in Tibet, but the Mahayana dharma was also studied and practiced. With the Vajrayana being widely practiced in Tibet, meditation was also practiced. With regard to meditation, there are the particular traditions, the views and practices of *Mahamudra* or the "great symbol" and *Dzogchen* or "great completeness." However, what is the basis from which such dharma arose? It is the sutras or the

teachings of the Buddha and the *shastras* or the commentaries that were composed in India by the great scholars and accomplished persons. In order to achieve this very high view of Mahamudra and Dzogchen, we need to cut our own doubt in order to eliminate hindrances of falling into various sorts of errors or aberrations. What helps in eliminating our doubt, hindrances, and errors is to listen to and contemplate the Mahayana dharma.

However, just studying and contemplating the dharma of the Mahayana is not enough. We need the experience of meditation to truly realize this dharma. Also we need to achieve the fruit quickly. In order to accomplish such experience and realization, and to do so quickly, we require the oral instructions of Mahamudra or Dzogchen. Without these it is impossible to achieve the profound experience and the completion of Mahamudra in a rapid manner. Therefore, an introduction to Mahamudra or Dzogchen is of great importance.

The Shastras

When it came to practice in Tibet, the practice of the panditas and adepts was that of the secret mantra Vajrayana. However, the teachings they heard and thought about were those of the Mahayana. Therefore, we need to listen to and contemplate the Mahayana teachings. In terms of what the Buddha-dharma comprises, it is twofold: there are the actual words spoken directly by the Buddha, which are recorded in the sutras, and there are the commentaries called shastras that were composed by the scholars on the meaning of these sutras. Of these two, the treatises or shastras are more important. There are many who feel that the way in which the Tibetan tradition has taken the shastras to be more important is a mistake. They say, "The root of the Buddha's tradition is the Buddha himself and therefore one ought to take his words (the sutras) to be the main material to be studied."

The reason the commentaries are of greater importance than the sutras is that the Buddha presented the teachings like this: A student would come to him and ask a question and the Buddha would give a reply. Some pupils came to the Buddha with faith, devotion, intelligence, the desire to practice, and asked their questions from that

point of view. Others had little faith, devotion or great yearning for the dharma and would ask questions and the Buddha would give different answers to these students according to their attitude or disposition. Thus, with the Buddha's speech there is the definitive teachings (Tib. *ngedön*) and there are the *provisional teachings* or teachings that would require interpretation (Tib. *drangdon*). If the Buddha were to give those without much faith and devotion the definitive teachings, they wouldn't have confidence in it. So, the Buddha gave them something else to think about; rather than giving them the actual or definitive teaching he gave them the provisional teachings.

So, if we were to read the sutras directly, we would make the mistake of taking a definitive teaching for being a provisional teaching or of taking a provisional teaching for being a definitive teaching. We would not know how to sort them out and figure out which one is which. Fortunately, after the Buddha's presentation of the dharma, many scholars with their own higher intelligence (Skt. *prajna*), their own experience, understood which from among the teachings were the definitive teachings and which were the provisional teachings. They wrote treatises differentiating the definitive from the provisional teachings. This is the reason why the shastras are more important, than the sutras.

Among the shastras or treatises, there are two types: the shastras themselves and the oral instructions. The shastras themselves approach various topics through reasoning and explain in detail and with great clarity topics such as the five aggregates (Skt. *skandhas*), the twelve sense fields (Skt. *ayatana*) and the eighteen elements (Skt. *dhatu*). These topics are principally presented in long analytical treatises. The *oral instructions* (Tib. *dag nag*) tell us how to practice by presenting instructions in a very brief way. Of these two, the shastras and the oral instructions, the oral instructions are more important.

Among the five treatises of Maitreya, four books are classed as shastras proper and one falls into the class of oral instructions. The four that are shastras are very extensive. They are *Ornament of Clear Realization* (Skt. *Abhisamayalankara*), the *Ornament of the Mahayana Sutras* (Skt. *Mahayanasutralankara*), *Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes* (Skt. *Madhyantavibhaga*) and *The Changeless Nature* (Skt.

Uttaratantra). The present text *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata* is very brief and direct in its presentation and is included within the class of oral instructions. Thus, for those who have faith and are exerting themselves in practice, the oral instructions are more important than the shastras.

How is it that *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata* is an oral instruction? Generally speaking, in mediation there is, as mentioned, Mahamudra and Dzogchen and within meditation there is the practice of *Shamatha* and *Vipashyana*. Between these two, in the context of Mahamudra and Dzogchen, it is Vipashyana or insight meditation that is mainly practiced. This is because we are introduced to the true nature (Tib. *nge lug*) of the mind. In Mahamudra and Dzogchen, by examining the mind directly we abandon the *disturbing emotions* and reach Buddhahood. In the sutra teachings, this profound nature is spoken of as dharmata or "nature of phenomena." In the context of mantra, it is called *sem* ("mind-nature").

It is just this nature of phenomena or mind's nature that is to be known. We must understand this through hearing and thinking about it. Nevertheless, ordinary people are not able to realize it directly. What is the reason for that? We are obstructed by conventional appearances. Due to conventional appearances we are not able to realize the dharma-nature or mind-nature. If we are able to realize this profound nature, then we will naturally separate from these confused, concealing or conventional sorts of appearances. Thus, this text, *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata,* is devoted to identifying and distinguishing just exactly what the conventional appearances or *conventional truths* are, and just exactly what the *ultimate truth* (the nature of phenomena or the ultimate enduring condition)[13] is. So, this treatise is extremely important for those who wish to practice the meditations of Mahamudra and Dzogchen.

This treatise, *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata,* was composed many generations ago. For that reason, if someone just picks it up and tries to understand it, it can be difficult to understand. After all, it is rather dissimilar from the kinds of books that we are familiar with in the present time and this makes it difficult to understand. However, given that a very great bodhisattva presented the teaching, it is not

incomprehensible and there is great benefit from having understood it. So, if we put forward exertion and approach it with longing and respect, then we can indeed understand it. In particular, those in Western countries have trained from a very young age in a variety of studies and have developed their intelligence and ability to reason well. Therefore, you will be able to understand this text clearly. Having understood it clearly and having developed confidence in what you have understood, if you then bring that into the practice of meditation, it will be of great benefit.

Understanding this text will be beneficial to those who have not yet given birth to meditation by arousing a desire to meditate. For those who have already given birth to meditation, it will help to give certainty, confidence, knowledge and stability in the meditation. For those who already have these qualities, it will allow these qualities to increase. Therefore, from whatever point of view you approach this teaching, it will be beneficial and extremely important.

B. The Homage

1.b. To the guardian Maitreya we bow in supplication.

In the past the homage to shastras would be to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. If the text concerned the *Vinaya* or monastic discipline it would say, "I prostrate to the Omniscient One." With texts concerning the Abhidharma the homage would say, "I prostrate to the youthful Manjushri." However, later translators departed from this tradition, and on this particular occasion the homage is to Maitreya.

The expression of the homage is also related to the time in which this text was translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan. Although all five of the treatises of Maitreya appeared in the world at the same time (Asanga dates are the fourth century C.E.), *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata*, the root text of *The Uttaratantra* and the commentary on *The Uttaratantra* composed by Asanga were concealed as treasures (Tib. *terma*). This was because their meaning was very profound and it was felt that these texts were not entirely suitable for the times. Later,

Maitripa, who lived at about the same time as the great master Naropa (roughly the year 1000 C.E.), saw light issuing forth from a crack in a stupa. From that light he saw that there was something very special inside, and he pulled out these three texts. So, these three texts were revealed by Maitripa and were thus widely disseminated in the world. These texts were brought to Tibet and were translated into Tibetan later than the earlier texts of Maitreya had been translated. So the homage is different from what is found in the translations of the other texts of Maitreya.

C. Why this Text was Written

2. Something there is to be given up fully through knowing
And something else which can only be actualized,
Because of which this treatise has been composed
With the wish to distinguish the traits defining these.

Maitreya gives the reason for composing this text by saying, basically, that we must understand what is called "that which possesses the quality." The quality to which this refers is the dharmata itself. It is translated as "phenomena" but it means that which bears the quality of dharmata. One must understand phenomena and also the dharmata. The phenomena themselves are samsaric, confused appearance or samsaric confusion. They need to be abandoned. What is the method for abandoning such phenomena? It is through recognizing and understanding the enduring condition, the true nature, or the way in which phenomena truly exist (Tib. *nge lug*). That must be known manifestly. Thus, it is for the purpose of abandoning confusion and realizing the non-confused state that this treatise has been composed.

We must understand the distinctive character of confused appearances and we must also understand the nature, the character, the conditions and the excellent qualities of dharmata. To do this, Maitreya gives this as the reason for having written his treatise by saying, "Because of which this treatise has been composed."

Questions

Question: I don't understand what the words dharma and dharmata mean.

Rinpoche: If the word dharma were to be translated directly out of Sanskrit into Tibetan, then it would be translated into Tibetan with the word *zin po*, which means "to hold." The notion is to prevent one from falling down; it holds one up. As for the word that the translators settled upon for translating dharma, the word *chö* actually means, "to fix something," "to repair something."[14] One has various faults and the notion is that chö is what repairs them. We talk about the quality of the seed or the cause of samsara: it is the three poisons, which are desire, hatred and ignorance. The function or role of chö or dharma is to fix or repair or heal those particular problems. Is it possible to do so? Is it possible to fix up, clear away or eliminate the hindrances, suffering, impediments and so forth? Yes, it is indeed possible to do so. It is possible to abandon desire, hatred and ignorance. How is such possible? We have at this point the various sorts of confusion or mistaken appearances. However, it is our good fortune that we can understand that these are in fact not true, that mistaken appearances and confusion are not the truth of the matter. We can know that, we can understand that, we can realize that. In fact, we can realize the actual nature, the true nature, the enduring condition of things. It is in that context that one speaks of dharmata, the true nature of things.

Question: The five treatises of Maitreya are divided into the Mind-only (Cittamatra) and Madhyamaka schools. Where does this text fit in and what is the characteristic to put it into that category?

Rinpoche: There are many different ways of explaining the five treatises of Maitreya in terms of the various philosophical schools in the Indian Buddhist tradition. Some say that all five books are texts of the Mind-only school. Some say that *The Ornament of Clear Realization* is a text of the Middle-way or Madhyamaka school and that the other four are texts of the Mind-only or Cittamatra school. Some say that *The Ornament of Clear Realization* and *The Uttaratantra* are texts of the Middle-way (Skt. Madhyamaka) school and that the other three are

texts of the Mind-only (Skt. Cittamatra) school. So, there are a great many ways of talking about this. However, in terms of joining this to meditation and practice, it is necessary to settle appearances, to resolve that appearances are just mind and that mind itself is empty and to realize emptiness in meditation. Even if one's view is that of the Madhyamaka school, it is nevertheless necessary to settle such appearances as being just mind. If one were then to say that this mind, that this stuff of these appearances were truly existent or truly established, then that would be the view of the Cittamatra school. However, there isn't any place in the five treatises of Maitreya where it is said that this mind, having settled that all appearances are just mind – that then says that this mind is truly existent or truly established. Thus, from that point of view it can be said that all of them are texts of the Middle-way school and in particular, from among them, *The Uttaratantra* and this text, *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata*, present the view of the *Shentong* or Empty-of-other school in that they teach the *sugatagarbha*, "the essence of the one gone to bliss."

My experience in talking about the dharma with people, in giving presentations and explanations on topics of the dharma, is that sometimes I am able to answer people's questions adequately and sometimes I am not. Sometimes I can help to clear away people's doubts about things and sometimes I am not able to do so. So, when you ask questions and if I am able to answer them properly, I will do so to the best of my ability and if I am not able to answer them properly, then I will just have to say, "Well, I'm sorry. I just don't know right now." For that reason we could extend the discussions a little bit and bring up whatever questions you have. Sometimes people think that because they have a tough and hard question, it wouldn't be suitable to ask. They think, "I shouldn't ask because it is a very tough question." That's not true. If you have a tough question, then please ask it and I will answer as best as I can. Some people think that because they have a tiny question that they should not ask it. They think, "I shouldn't ask because it is such a silly question." That's not true either. Whatever questions you have, please ask them and I will answer them as best as I can. I will tell you whatever I know.

Question: I would like to know how Maitripa got the mind teaching from this?

Rinpoche: What Maitripa found was an actual book, a text. It was neither something offered to him by the *dakinis* nor was it a mind treasure. Between sutra and mantra, at this point we are discussing the view taught within the tradition of sutra and therefore the uncommon, miraculous displays of the mantra tradition do not come into play. Maitripa discovered these texts by way of direct knowledge or clairvoyance and by way of having a karmic relationship with it, just because he was a very fortunate person.



Chapter Two
A Brief Presentation of the Text

II. The Brief Presentation of the Text

A. The Definition of dharma (Phenomena) and Dharmata (Pure Being)

3. A summary of everything in brief
Should be known to include the following two motifs,
Since everything can be summarized fully in terms
Of phenomena and likewise pure being.

4. That which is classified here as phenomena
Is samsara; that which is classified precisely
As pure being is nirvana, transcendence of grief,
As this is defined by the vehicles, which are three.

This treatise introduces a topic by giving a brief overview of the subject and then it gives a more detailed description of the same topic. We begin in this chapter with the brief overview and then give

the detailed characteristics of dharma, which is our conventional perception of the world we live in, follwed by dharmata.

Addressing the topic of dharma and dharmata is extremely vast, with the word "dharma" meaning "phenomena" but in this text it refers to all confused samsaric appearances. The word "dharmata" also means "phenomena," but it also refers to the nature of all of these phenomena, which is how they truly are.[15] Therefore, there is nothing that is not included within these two: dharma and dharmata. On the one hand, dharma refers to all worldly, samsaric appearances, to the way that things appear, and dharmata refers to the way in which they actually are or abide. Therefore, if we can realize both the manner of appearance and the manner of abiding, we have realized everything.

Some scholars have illustrated how things appear and how they actually abide by using an example of a rope that is mistaken for a snake. If we see a rope in a dark room and believe that this rope is a snake, we then become frightened and confused, thinking, "It will bite me and if it bites me, then I may die. I am in a lot of trouble." However, there is no need to be afraid because there isn't really a snake there. Nevertheless, thinking that there is a snake, we become frightened and we suffer. So what would be the method for helping relieve the suffering in this particular instance? We might look for a weapon or an antidote for snakebite. But, in fact, those solutions don't help at all because the solution is to simply realize that it is not a snake. If we understand that it is not a snake but a rope, then we will no longer be afraid, we will no longer suffer, and all those problems will be solved.

Similarly, in cyclic existence (Skt. *samsara*), which is dharma, we sometimes experience suffering and other times joy. We may experience bodily suffering of illness or experience the mental suffering of unhappiness. Whatever our experience, there is always the suffering of impermanence.[16] We might think that the proper method to eliminate such suffering is to eliminate impermanence. However, that is not the best way to go about it. The best way to go about eliminating the suffering of samsara is to understand that these phenomena are not solid and real in their own nature; they do not exist inherently.

How then do we understand the way in which phenomena actually exist? It is through realizing dharmata, the way in which phenomena

actually abide. What we mean by dharmata is the nirvana of the three vehicles (the Hinayana, the Mahayana, and the Vajrayana). The Tibetan word for "nirvana" is literally "passed beyond suffering."[17] Realizing dharmata, we understand the true manner of abiding of things or phenomena and that is the method for clearing away the suffering of samsara. That is like realizing that a rope is not a snake.

B. The Characteristics of Dharma and Dharmata

1. The Characteristics of Dharma

5. Here the traits of phenomena are defined
As duality plus assumption and formulation,
Whose appearance is the mistaken conceptual process;
Since what appears is not and is thus not real.
No referents have ever existed either
And, being but concept, consist of conceptualization.

Dharmas are phenomena, the various apparent phenomena and confused appearances of samsara, which bring with them a great deal of difficulty and hardship. However, we are extremely fortunate because the manner of appearance of such phenomena are confused and can therefore be abandoned. Because such samsaric appearances are mistaken, are not true, we can realize dharmata. By realizing dharmata it is possible to abandon the problems, hardships, and suffering of samsara.[18]

There are three definitive characteristics of samsaric phenomena: "duality, assumption and formulation." First is the aspect of the perceived and the perceiver as being separate, dualistic appearances (duality). Then, in relation to such, what appears to one's mind, the imaginary dualistic phenomena as actually existing (assumption), accompanied by various sorts of verbal expressions (formulation). This makes up what we mean by the Tibetan term *chö jin* or "phenomena," which are conventional truths (Tib. *kunzop denpa*).

We see such conventional truths; however, they do not exist the way that we perceive them. Their appearance is not correct. Rather, these phenomena are just our own mental activity of what is called "mind only" (Tib. *sem tsam*). There are in fact no objects; there is just this mental activity. This refers to conceptual activity and non-conceptual sense-consciousness. What is being said is that it is not an appearance of objects; it is just mental activity.[19]

The Four Schools of Buddhism

In terms of resolving the view, the Buddha taught in stages. So in accordance with that, various philosophical schools or tenets have come about. There are in particular four major schools. The first is the *Vaibhashika* school or Great-exposition or Particularist school, which is associated with the *shravakas*. The second is *Sautrantika* or Sutra school. The third is the Cittamatra or Mind-only school. The fourth school is known as the Madhyamaka or Middle-way school.[20] The Buddha taught the philosophical view in these stages and if we proceed in these stages, we can understand that appearances are just mind and that mind itself has no inherent existence.

Buddha said that our mode of procedure towards the view is like going up a staircase; we have to go up the first step, then the second step, and then the third step and so on. If we were to try to jump from the bottom of the staircase to the top, that would not be possible. Similarly, if we were to say to beginners, "All things are just emptiness," they wouldn't be able to realize it or develop any conviction of that statement. If we were to say to beginners, "The Buddha's wisdom dwells in all sentient beings" or "All appearances are just of the nature of mind," they wouldn't understand it, they wouldn't be able to realize it quickly, and they wouldn't develop a conviction of its truth rapidly. Therefore, the Buddha taught in a different way. First he taught about the skandhas or aggregates, indicating that a person is a collection of many different parts, that external phenomena are also collections of many different things, they are not single, solid objects. External appearances, then, are just a collection of many very tiny small particles that we could call "atoms." As for internal apprehending consciousness,

it is a collection of indivisible moments of mind.[21] This is the view of the first school, the Vaibhashikas, who say that the minute partless particles and irreducible moments of mind are truly existent and it is through a collection of such inseparable particles or a continuum of such irreducible moments of mind that the gross phenomena that we ordinarily apprehend come about. It is only through a continuum that, for instance, something such as a year or a month comes about. There is no large, hard thing that exists in the way in which things ordinarily appear.

The Sautrantika school differentiates between 1) what is a mere abstraction; what has only general characteristics, objects of our thoughts or abstract images that we can construct conceptually, and 2) what is a specifically characterized thing; something that has its own unique characteristics, an actual thing that appears before us that's there whether we think about it or not. For example, when we think "fire," the fire we're thinking about can't burn anything, it doesn't do anything, it cannot perform the function of burning. What actually does something is the actual thing that is there beyond our names and concepts, that to which we give the name fire; it has its own totally unique characteristics unlike anything else. It is a unique object and it is performing the function of being hot and burning whether we think it burns us or not. That's what the Sautrantika school says; that there is an object there that really does exist beyond our concepts about what it is, and that the concepts are mere fabrications that don't really exist. The Sautrantikas also say that external, material phenomena have the nature of being established as particles, which are the cause of appearances.

If you look then at the specifically characterized object itself, it doesn't have any name, it doesn't have any conceptually fabricated characteristics at all. It is its own unique entity and what that is, is completely indescribable and inconceivable. Our own mental experiences are precisely the same. When we feel happy or we feel down then we give it those labels but if you really examine the experience, it's inexpressible. It can't be named or labeled by any conceptual term and that in the Sautrantika school is evidence of a specifically characterized thing. Therefore the inexpressible, specifically characterized thing truly exists, according to the Sautrantikas.

There are various differences between the Vaibhashika school and the Sautrantikas, but in terms of their view, it is basically the same. Both hold that apparent and gross phenomena are, in fact, merely collections of truly existent partless particles and truly existent irreducible moments of mind. The important point of these views is that ordinarily we apprehend coarse or gross phenomena and these viewpoints show this is a great mistake. If we are able to realize that phenomena are not the massive, solid things that they appear to be, then that is the first step on the staircase.

If you are able to understand these particular presentations, to meditate upon them, and to truly realize them, then you will abandon a great many faults and achieve a great many good qualities. However, you must go further than that. A further step on the staircase is to understand that all appearances are just mind, and this was emphasized by the third school, the Mind-only school. The Buddha himself said that phenomena are just mind[22] and this was explained clearly and in detail by various learned scholars who made this argument in terms of two logical arguments. The first is a negation or refutation of external phenomena. The second is a demonstration that external phenomena are, in fact, internal mind.

Why External Phenomena are Empty

In the first analysis or first step we understood that what appears to be coarse, external phenomena are really just a collection of very tiny, subtle particles gathered together. If we pursue that sort of analysis, we would have to come to the point of saying that the tiny particles themselves are not composed of parts; that they are irreducible or indivisible phenomena. However, if we investigate this claim carefully, we discover that there is no such thing as a smallest indivisible particle. We could hypothesize the existence of indivisible particles, but, in fact, there is no such thing. Therefore, the way in which such massive and gross phenomena come about is not through the collection of a great many very tiny particles, rather it is just the coming about through appearing for our own internal mind.[23]

Why External Phenomena are Mind

There are two logical reasons often used to explain why external phenomena are, in fact, just appearances of the mind, luminous knowledge and dependent arising. Here I will explain the first, "luminous knowledge." If we consider various external phenomena such as a mountain or a chair or a thimble, we feel that the object exists. We do this because we can see it. It is merely the seeing of something that leads us to feel, think, and believe that it exists. However, there is no other way to establish or to prove the existence of something. For instance, if we think that a particular mountain exists, we say, "Well, I saw it and that's why I think it exists." If we ask someone else, "Why do you think that such a thing exists?" All they can answer is, "Well, I saw it. That's all." It's just an appearance for our mind. Consider the stupa outside this monastery. We think it exists. Why do we think that it exists? We believe this because we see it. We see it because it appears to our mind. But there is no way to demonstrate the existence of something that has not appeared to our mind. There is no way to demonstrate the existence of something without its appearing to mind. Therefore, external phenomena and internal mind are inseparable.

Similarly, if we hear a sound, we think that the sound exists. Why do we think that sound exists? "Because I heard it," is our answer. Is there an unheard sound? No, there isn't. Thus, whether we talk about visible images, sounds that are apprehended by our ear, smells apprehended by our nose, or various tastes that are tasted by our tongue, it is only because of their appearing to our mind that we think that they exist. Thus, external things are just internal mind. Therefore, these external appearances are just our internal mind. They are not truly established as what they appear to be. The main point at this juncture is that appearances are just appearances for mind.[24]

When we distinguish the Middle-way (Skt. *Madhyamaka*) school – the next step on the ladder – from the Mind-only (Skt. *Cittamatra*) school, we say that the view of the Mind-only school is lower than that of the Middle-way school.[25] The reason is that the Mind-only school believes that while all appearances are mind, the mind itself truly exists. So, from that consideration, the view of the Mind-only school is inferior

to the Middle-way school. Nevertheless, the view set forth in the context of the Mind-only school is very important because it is able to settle precisely that appearances are just mind. There is an important practical purpose for establishing this fact. For instance, when we practice Mahamudra or Dzogchen meditation, we need to realize the mind as it really is. But if we have not understood that external appearances are actually just our mind, then realizing the mind's way of existing is not of any great benefit. Therefore, the arguments presented by the Mind-only school, that external phenomena are just mind, is of great importance and benefit.

The demonstration that external phenomena are just the mind is very important in the practice of Mahamudra and Dzogchen meditation. In fact, it is the root of all meditation; it is extremely helpful for all meditation because it allows us to see the great importance of mind. If mind were not itself important, then meditation on mind would not be particularly important or helpful. It is like mistaking a rope for a snake. If it really was a snake and we thought, "It's not a snake. It's a rope," then no matter how much we thought it wasn't a snake when it bites us it would not be of much good. Similarly, the fact that external appearances are really just our mind means that there is a great value and benefit to understanding the mind's true way of existing.

2. The Characteristics of Dharmata

6. The other factor, pure being, is defined
As suchness, in which there is no differentiation
Between a factor perceived and a perceiver,
A signifier contra a signified.

In the previous verse discussing dharma, we saw that the various mistaken appearances of samsara seem to be external phenomena, but that they are not actually external things, but merely appearances to mind. As for mind itself, if external things actually existed as solid outside objects, then there would be internal consciousnesses that

validly and accurately apprehend these phenomena as external. For instance, if there were actually some patch of blue existing externally, then there would be an internal consciousness apprehending that patch of blue accurately as an external phenomenon. If, on the other hand, there is no such thing as an external color blue, then there is no internal consciousness apprehending it as such. If we apply this more vastly, the same is true with regard to forms, sounds, and everything else. In this way, if the phenomena that seem to be external and that are apprehended by consciousness are, in fact, not external phenomena, then similarly the internal consciousness is not valid.

In that way, the lack of solid external phenomena indicates similarly the lack of valid establishment of internal consciousnesses that apprehend external phenomena. Furthermore, this applies to the words that are used to express and name various phenomena and it applies to those phenomena that receive such names. As it says quite literally, "those which express" and "those which are expressed" or "the signifier" and "that which is signified." So, the relationship between objects and words is similarly shown to be one in which there is no difference between the two in the manner that there seems to be. In this way, from among the four major philosophical schools (the Vaibhashika, Sautrantika, Cittamatra and Madhyamaka) we are coming to the view of the Middle-way or Madhyamaka school. This school holds that all phenomena (external phenomena and internal mind) lack inherent existence and do not have any nature of their own.[26] In this way, the conventional and ultimate status of phenomena is demonstrated.

C. The Rationale for this Distinction

7. Because what does not exist appears, delusion
Provides the cause for completely afflicted states;
Since things like illusory elephants appear,
Even what does exist does not appear.

Clearly, there are appearances of visual forms, sounds, odors and so forth that appear. Are these nothing whatsoever? No, phenomena do

appear. But these appearances are of things which do not exist, they are appearances of non-existing phenomenon. Because appearances are based on non-existent phenomena, the appearances are false or incorrect. The true nature of phenomena is impermanent, but it appears to be solid and unchanging and permanent. So in this regard phenomena are also false or mistaken. Since such appearances are mistaken or confused, they are the cause of disturbing emotions[27] (Skt. *kleshas*) which are called afflictions here. As the cause of afflictions, they are the cause of suffering because disturbing emotions are what cause our suffering in life.[28]

Even though phenomena do not exist, nevertheless they do appear. As Buddha says in the *Heart Sutra,* "Form is emptiness": i.e. forms lack a nature of their own, they lack inherent existence. Does that mean that forms are utterly non-existent? No, because it then says, "Emptiness is form": i.e. emptiness itself appears as form. This is like the way in which a magician may conjure up an illusion of an elephant or we might give the example of an elephant appearing in our dream which really appears to us, but obviously there is no real elephant in the room while we are dreaming. So, even though appearances do not exist, nevertheless they do appear. In just this way, appearances dawn on the conventional level.

> *8. If either the lack of existence or the appearance*
> *Were missing, delusion and freedom from delusion*
> *And likewise states afflicted in every respect*
> *And thorough refinement would be unjustified.*

Although they do not exist, various conventional phenomena do appear; therefore they are just confusion. And since these appearances are just confusion, it is possible to see through this confusion and achieve Buddhahood. In other words, it then is possible to realize the actual nature of phenomena and to meditate and achieve Buddhahood.

If, on the other hand, phenomena truly existed, then afflictions and mistaken appearances would not be mistaken or false. If they truly existed as solid real objects, then there would be no impermanence or gradual change within appearance and then it would not be possible

to achieve nirvana or Buddhahood. If appearances were real, there would be no realization of some correct nature that was opposite to this mistaken appearance. If there were no realization of a true nature of phenomena, it would not be possible to achieve nirvana. Therefore, if phenomena were truly established, there would be neither samsara nor nirvana.

D. The Relationship Between Dharma And Dharmata

> *9. These two are not one and the same nor do they differ,*
> *Because, between that which exists and that which does not,*
> *A distinction exists and yet does not exist.*

The root text next discusses the relationship between dharma and dharmata, asking whether they are one nature or different natures. In fact, they are neither one nature nor different natures.

First, we try to determine whether they are of the same nature. They are not of the same nature because conventional appearances are not inherently established; even though they appear in a certain way, they are not established in the way that they appear and therefore they are false. Dharmata, on the other hand, is true. Since the one is false and the other is true, they have a different character and are not of the same nature.

Then, if dharma and dharmata are not of the same nature, are they different? No, they are not different because dharmata is the mere non-existence of dharma. It is not some other "thing;" it is not something that exists somewhere else. It is not possible to have these various confused appearances in one place and dharmata (which is their way of existing) somewhere else and apart. Dharmata is the mere non-establishment of dharma in the way that dharmas seem to exist. Thus, these two, dharma and dharmata, are devoid of being either one nature or different natures.

Thus we have discussed the definitive characteristics of dharma and dharmata and the matter of whether or not they are of the same or

different natures. Other texts discuss the *egolessness of persons* and the *egolessness of phenomena* in two points. However, it amounts to the same thing; these two ways of approaching the matter come down to the same meaning.

The Egolessness of the Individual

Generally speaking, Buddha taught the selflessness or egolessness of persons (Tib. *dag me*) in the Hinayana and the egolessness of phenomena in the Mahayana. The Buddha presented the egolessness of persons in the Hinayana for a particular reason. Sentient beings dwelling in samsara experience a great deal of suffering and they must understand this suffering in order to find release from suffering. However, the mere wish to abandon suffering is not sufficient. Rather, we need to understand the causes of suffering, which are karma and the disturbing emotions. People have become quite used to the causes of suffering and have established strong predispositions for engaging in the causes of suffering. We might think, "I am going to abandon suffering now. I am going to abandon hatred. I am going to abandon envy. I am going to abandon desire." In fact, it is not possible to simply do this. We can abandon suffering only by abandoning the causes of suffering, which are the disturbing emotions. The cause of the disturbing emotions is the belief in a self.[29]

It is possible to abandon the conception of self.[30] The Buddha saw that the conception of self is a mistaken conception. If the self actually existed, it would not be possible to abandon it. However, this conception of self is false because, in fact, there is no self. We can arrive at this through analysis and reasoning and through a path of meditation. Once having understood the conception of self to be false, then it will naturally be overcome. For this reason, Buddha taught the person's lack of self first in the Hinayana.

There are a great many non-Buddhist traditions that do not take this lack of a self into consideration. However, in Buddhism the lack of self is regarded as very important and is known as one of "the *four seals*" that mark a doctrine as being the word of the Buddha. Selflessness occupies a prominent place because by realizing selflessness, then an

unpeaceful mind can become peaceful and tamed. Therefore, the recognition and realization of selflessness is regarded as extremely important and is a distinctive feature of the Buddhist tradition.

There are two aspects for this conception of self: the conception of "I" and the conception of "mine." Of these two aspects of the conception of self the main erroneous belief is the perception of "I." However, it is easier to discuss the conception of mine. We all have a concept that certain things are "mine." For instance, sometimes we think, "my mind" and other times we think, "my body." At that point we have broadened the conception of "mine" to include our entire body. We can go on expanding this to include "my house" or "my land" or "my country." At other times these things are regarded as "not belonging to me," but as "belonging to someone else" such as "this isn't my land." There is little stability to this concept of mine. For instance, if we are talking about Tibetans and Tibet, however much we might think, "my country," nevertheless we don't have control over it; it's not ours.

The conception of mine is a source of difficulty, suffering and hardship. We could consider an example that outside this monastery there are a lot of stores selling vajras and bells. If we go into one shop where they sell a bell and we see a bell fall to the ground and break, we just think, "Oh, a bell fell to the ground and broke." However, if our own bell falls to the ground and breaks, then that is very painful. Why is there suffering in one example and no suffering in the other example? It simply leads back to whether or not we regard something as belonging to us or not. If we think that it is "mine," then there is suffering; if we think that this isn't "mine," then there is no suffering.

No matter how much we think of something as "mine," this is a false belief. Between the bell that fell on the floor in the store and our own bell that broke, there is really no difference. There is nothing inside or outside the bell that particularly makes it our bell. It is simply confusion in our mind and such confusion leads to suffering. Then to be free from such suffering, we have to realize that "mine" is really non-existent. Through understanding the lack of any inherent reality of mine, the power of our perception of mine becomes weaker. As that conception becomes weaker, then our suffering decreases.

The conception of "mine" focuses upon one object and then upon another and thus the object of such a conception is extremely unstable. Similarly, the conception of "I" is unstable. Sometimes we think "I" in regard to our mind and sometimes we think "I" in regard to our body. When we are thinking "I" in regard to our mind, sometimes we think this in regard to all *six consciousnesses* and we sometimes think this only in regard to the sixth *mental consciousness*. In this way, the conception of "I" is also not stable. Also, our body is a collection of many different material substances gathered together and we cannot point to one part and say this part is "I." Similarly, our mind is a collection of many different moments of consciousnesses. It is not just one thing. It is only through the collection of the sense of past, present and future, that we think "I" in regard to the continuum of the mind over a period of time. However, whether we look into the past, the present or the future, we will not find any one thing as being a self. If we realize this lack of self, then our disturbing emotions of aggression, attachment, pride and jealousy will gradually diminish. So first, this lack of self needs to be known or understood; secondly, it must be meditated upon; and thirdly, it must be actually realized. When it has been realized, then the disturbing emotions will be abandoned.

The Selflessness of Dharmas (Phenomena)

The realization of the egolessness of self enables us to overcome the conception of a self of persons, thereby pacifying the disturbing emotions (Skt. *kleshas*). Next is the egolessness of dharma. The Sanskrit word "dharma" and the Tibetan word *chö* mean many different things. One use of the word "dharma" is for those things that are to be practiced, another is for various objects of knowledge. Here the word "dharma" is used for "all things" which we also call "phenomena."

In the context of the egolessness of dharmas, the dharmas are objects of knowledge, whether we are speaking about external phenomena (such as visible images and sounds) or internal phenomena (such as feelings and thoughts). All of these objects of knowledge are called "dharma." When we realize the person's lack of self, then we begin to eliminate the cause of suffering. When we realize the lack of self of the

solidity of phenomena, then we can understand what suffering actually is. We see that these causes of suffering have no nature of their own. Through understanding that, we see that they have no ability to harm us. In explaining the lack of inherent existence of phenomena, the Buddha taught their final character.

In the sutra tradition, the egolessness of phenomena is approached by the path of reasoning. It is presented in the context of the Middle-way (Skt. Madhyamaka) school and Mind-only (Skt. Cittamatra) school. As discussed before, the Mind-only school postulates that appearances are just mind. By recognizing that the appearances themselves are mistaken, we understand that the mind is also mistaken and thus the mind itself is no more inherently existent than the phenomena that appears to it. That is the way in which the egolessness of phenomena is presented by the Mind-only school. The Middle-way school approaches the egolessness of phenomena through investigation of the cause, through effect, and then through the very entity of phenomena: i.e. just what they are. In the sutra tradition of the Middle-way school, we proceed on a path of inference and arrive at what is known as "ascertaining consciousness." However, in the tradition of the Vajrayana we do not use the path of inference, but use the path of meditation. We meditate and this gives rise to experience; and through this we are introduced to the true nature of the mind.[31] In this meditation, the egolessness of phenomena or dharmata appears and is understood and realized. Through realization of the egolessness of phenomena (dharmata) we recognize phenomena as naturally (of their own accord) peaceful, pleasant and liberated.

Questions

Question: Does the Vaibhashika school say that indivisible particles and irreducible moments have the same nature?

Rinpoche: Such is not held to be the case by the Vaibhashika school; rather the one, the indivisible particles, are external phenomena; they are material, atomic: whereas the irreducible moments of consciousness are internal mind; they are luminous, clear awareness. These two are

in the relationship of the object apprehended and the subject apprehending the object.

Question: Do the indivisible particles have the nature of matter in the way that we understand them in the West?
Rinpoche: As explained earlier, Buddha presented both the definitive meaning and the provisional meaning or a meaning that tends to lead one somewhere else. In Tibetan the definitive meaning is *ngedön* and the provisional or indicative meaning is *drangdön*. As definitive meaning, we have the teachings of the Mind-only and Middle-way school. However, if teachings of the definitive meaning were presented to trainees at the beginning, it would be too much for them; they wouldn't understand. Therefore, Buddha taught beginners the way things appear to beginners. And the analysis, therefore, begins with studying the appearance of things as gross or coarse or rough phenomena, analyzing to see if they are indeed such and seeing that they probably aren't. One can then say, "No, that isn't really what they are. They are composed of parts and moments." So, Buddha began by teaching ordinary persons in accordance with the way that things appeared to ordinary persons. And the experience of ordinary persons is that which we are calling "mind" has the nature of knowledge and what we are calling "external phenomena" has the nature of being external, material, solid, obstructive stuff. In the Vaibhashika school, the relation between the perceiving consciousness and the perceived phenomena is that one thing looks directly at the other; the apprehended phenomena is that which is looked at and the apprehending consciousness or knower is that which looks directly, one at the other.

Question: Is the self of persons overcome by looking at our mind, the one who apprehends things?
Rinpoche: When we speak of a self of persons, we are not speaking just about an apprehension of one's internal mind, rather what that refers to is the collection or aggregation of all five skandhas, all five aggregates. It is the apprehension of those five together that one considers to be "I." In dependence upon apprehending those skandhas as "I," one

gives birth to various sorts of disturbing emotions, kleshas. Through recognizing that the basis for the generation of that thought "I" does not exist, then one is able to abandon the kleshas that arise in dependence upon thinking "I." Therefore, one seeks to realize the selflessness of the person in meditation. However, having done so, having realized the person's lack of a self does not amount to having realized the emptiness of either internal or external phenomena.

Question: You spoke about the two practices of Mahamudra and Dzogchen. I wonder what is Dzogchen and how does it differ from Mahamudra?

Rinpoche: There isn't much of a difference. There is a difference in terms of the transmission or lineage through which the oral instructions have passed from teacher to student. The oral instructions of the Dzogchen begin with the teacher Garab Dorje and passed to his student Shri Simha and so forth. The oral instructions of the Mahamudra tradition begin with Tilopa, passed from Tilopa to Naropa and so forth. There are differences in terms of method and the quintessential instructions. However, in terms of when we are settling just that which is meditated upon, where do we look? Where do we meditate? We meditate upon the manner of abiding, particularly, the mind's manner of abiding and thus those who practice the tradition of Dzogchen (great completeness) are led in terms of the mind and meditate upon the mind's way of abiding. Those who practice the tradition of Mahamudra (the great seal) are led in terms of the mind and meditate upon the mind's true nature. For that reason, there is no difference in the thing, the meaning or the practice itself. There are differences in terms of the quintessential instructions by which the view is generated, but not in the thing itself. So, by way of the various differences in quintessential instructions, we speak about the different traditions, the one of the great seal and the other of the great completeness.

Question: Is one better than the other?

Rinpoche: I think that they are mostly the same.

Question: I didn't understand why the Mind-only school is lower than the Middle-way school?
Rinpoche: The Mind-only school views all phenomena appearing as appearances of mind or appearances for mind, while the mind truly exists. How do we settle the view in terms of the Middle-way school? It is through analyzing worldly, confused or mistaken appearances and understanding that such confused appearances are not inherently established. The word that the Middle-way school uses to describe this lack of inherent existence or lack of any nature of its own is "emptiness" or shunyata in Sanskrit. Thus, the Middle-way school shows that all outer and inner phenomena are empty of inherent existence. Nevertheless, such phenomena naturally appear to or for our mind conventionally. The demonstration of all phenomena as lacking inherent existence is the particular tenet of the Middle-way school.

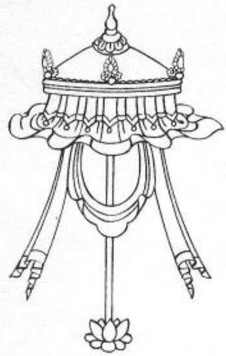
Question: The argument of the Mind-only school, which establishes that appearances are only mind, is strange because this only seems to prove that we simply don't experience some things. There could be things that, in fact, we don't experience that don't appear for the mind and yet have existence. This argument does not address that. I apparently don't understand this argument. Would you explain it more carefully, please?
Rinpoche: You have to look very closely at the reason why you think that something that does not appear to your mind exists. If you think that something that does not appear to your mind exists, it has got to be either from the point of view of a correct sign of its existence or from the point of view of direct perception; those are the only two possibilities. You have to look very closely at the reason why you think that something that does not appear to your mind nevertheless exists.

Question: But, what would be a correct sign? What exactly do you mean by that terminology?
Rinpoche: Sign means reason. You have to have a reason. What is the reason for thinking that something that has never appeared to anyone's mind exists?

Question: You explained the fifth verse, "the characteristics of dharma," and said that there are three definite characteristics of dharma: duality, assumption and formulation. The first is the duality of the perceiver and the perceived. I am not sure whether what you have discussed so far comes under that point or whether it is the second or third.
Rinpoche: In this talk I spoke about the non-existence of apprehended and apprehender and the way that they seem to exist and about the appearance of apprehended and apprehender as two, about dualistic appearance and about the incorrectness of that appearance. So, we are in the first.

Question: Rinpoche, you said, I believe, "that all appearances are mind" but what about the cup of tea? I'm confused at this point.
Rinpoche: What is being said is that things are merely appearances to or for mind and not that they are made by mind in that way. Things are not an independent display. Like a reflection in a mirror, put something in front of a mirror and then there is a reflection or an appearance of that thing in a mirror. But, it is not just anything that appears in the mirror.

Question: So, there's no volition?
Rinpoche: No, it's not just because you want it. Therefore, we have to meditate. If it were a matter of what we wanted, then whenever things should run pleasant, we could say, "Let things be pleasant." But it doesn't work that way.



CHAPTER THREE
A Detailed Examination of Dharma

In this text we are examining the differences between dharma and dharmata. In the previous chapter we discussed the brief explanations of dharma and dharmata. Next come the detailed explanations. In this chapter we will discuss the detailed explanation of the characteristics of dharma or ordinary phenomena. This discussion is given in terms of six points.

III. The Detailed Explanation of Dharma

A. An Overview of the Six Points

10. Because it provides a thorough introduction
To their characteristics as well as their rationale,
Their neither being the same nor different,
The ground in common and not in common shared,
And the lack of appearance involving perceiver-perceived,
This six-point approach to phenomena is the best.

This verse outlines the six points: (1) definitive characteristics, (2) rationale, (3) being neither same nor different, (4) common ground, (5) not shared in common, and (6) lack of perceiver and perceived.

B. A Detailed Explanation

1. Defining Characteristics
2. The Rationale
3. Being neither Same nor Different

11. Of these, the defining traits and the rationale,
As well as the lack of sameness and difference,
Are just as these were demonstrated in brief.

This verse says that the first three points have already been discussed in the previous chapter and won't be discussed further. These three points were: (1) the definitive character or traits of dharma and dharmata, (2) rationale, the nature which is mistaken, and (3) the question of whether or not dharmas and dharmata are identical or different.

Two Types of Experience

12. As long as there is someone circling somewhere
These are the grounds in each and every case –
The constituents of beings and those of the vessel.
The constituents of the vessel appear to be shared,
The awareness being the common experience;
Some of the constituents of beings
Are experienced in common and some are not.

The next topic is where are sentient beings born, where do they dwell, and why do they continue to revolve within samsara or cyclic existence.

This topic has two aspects: the elements (Skt. *dhatu*) of sentient beings and the elements of the world that serve as the vessel. First of all, if we are speaking about the elements of sentient beings, we are considering mind and the individuality of sentient beings. When we are considering the external elements, we are interested in questions such as where sentient beings are born, where they live and so forth. As for the external vessel that sentient beings inhabit, although there are slight differences for the individual mind of each sentient being, generally speaking it's more or less identical: i.e., the way in which a mountain appears to someone is the same for different people.

4. The Common Ground

13. Further, birth and conventions, to nurture, subdue,
Benefit, harm, excellent features and faults
Are mutually caused by way of an interchange,
Because of which these are experience shared in common.

If we consider states that are common and approach this by seeking to understand how it is that various states are common to different sentient beings and how uncommon experiences come about, first of all considering those that are common, there would be the matter of birth, the activities of body and speech, work, conversation, discussion, helping or harming someone, the development of good qualities or faults. Some matters are not accomplished by one sentient being alone, but rather are accomplished through the interaction of a variety of sentient beings. For instance, for a sentient being to be born we need three people – the mother, father and the person who is born.[32] In this way, a shared or common appearance comes about.[33] With regard to the activities of body and speech, the work that we do physically is done in common with others. As for speech, it requires someone who is speaking and someone who is listening. As for helping or doing harm, we need at least two individuals making this a shared or mutual experience.[34]

5. Not Shared in Common

14. Since the ground and awareness, happiness, suffering,
Action, transition at death, captivity, birth,
And liberation are not observed in common,
They comprise the realm of experience not shared in common.

As for uncommon states or uncommon appearances we are discussing that which appears only for ourselves alone. The two topics here are source and consciousnesses.

6. Lack of Perceiver and Perceived

a. The Alaya Consciousness

15. What appear to be outer, perceivable in common,
Are perceiving awareness; they are not referents
Existing as something extrinsic to consciousness,
Precisely because they are common experiences.

When we say "the source" what we mean is that the alaya consciousness serves as the basis or source for all appearances. When, as Buddhists, we assert appearances to be mind, we are not saying that, for instance when we are inside a particular building, nothing else exists. We are not saying that such things do not exist because they cannot appear in our mind. Rather, when we go somewhere else, that suitability for appearances to dawn resides as latencies or predispositions within each individual person's mind-basis of all or alaya consciousness (Skt. *alaya vijnana*. Tib. *kunshi nampar shepa*). When we go somewhere else, it is suitable for such things to appear because we have predispositions or latencies such that such appearances can indeed come about; then in fact they do and they will at that point appear as objects for our own consciousnesses.[35]

B. THE OTHER CONSCIOUSNESSES

16. The counterpart is the one in which what is perceived
Is not shared in common. Here awareness' referent
Is the minds and so on associated with others.
These do not comprise an object of mutual exchange
For perceiving awareness not resting nor resting poised,
Because, for those not resting in equipoise,
It is but their own conceptions which appear;
And because, for those who are resting in equipoise,
It is its faithful reflection that appears
As the object encountered during samadhi absorption.

Next the text discusses the other seven consciousnesses. At this point we are certain that appearances are just appearances for mind. The word "minds" in the third line refers to the eight consciousnesses with the eighth, the alaya consciousness, being the basis for the other seven consciousnesses.

The first five consciousnesses are called the "consciousnesses of the five gates." The gates are the five senses. They are called gates because they seem to be the gates by means of which your mind encounters that which is outside your body. So they are like gates by means of which your mind can project itself or expand itself beyond the body. The first of the five gates is the eyes. The eyes are the organic basis for the eye consciousness. The eyes encounter as their object visible form, color and shape. This comes about because of the eye sense-power. When the eyes encounter an object, what is generated is called the "eye or visual consciousness." That is the first of the five sense-consciousnesses. The other four are similar to that. The second consciousness is connected with the ears; because of an ear sense-power, various sorts of sounds are heard by the ear consciousness. This applies to the third olfactory consciousness that perceives various odors. These are perceived in dependence upon a nose sense-power. Then, the tongue sense-power allows various tastes to be perceived by the fourth tongue consciousness. The fifth is the whole body as an organ of tactile sensation; various tangible objects (some smooth, some rough, some

painful and so forth) are experienced by the body consciousness because of the body sense-power.

So these consciousnesses operate by way of the five gates or doors with the five doors being the five sensory organs. The five sense-consciousnesses are non-conceptual consciousnesses so that the eye consciousness, for example, doesn't think about the past or present; rather it apprehends the visual object as it exists right now. It doesn't think the object is good or bad; it just sees clearly. Similarly, the other sense-consciousnesses do not evaluate the past or future, accept or reject things as being good or bad. They simply see what exists right now. It is direct experience. Therefore these consciousnesses are non-conceptual and do not generate any thought about the characteristics of what they experience, they do not conceptually recognize the things that they perceive or experience.

Our misperception of outer appearances is not really due to some defect in the five sensory consciousnesses. What is greatly mistaken in our perception is the sixth, mental consciousness. The mental consciousness is conceptual and thinks about what is experienced by the five senses, it conceptually recognizes them as such and such, it thinks about whether things are good or bad and mixes external sensory information with names and labels. The mental consciousness does not work with or appear on the basis of a specific sense organ like the other five. It inhabits the body in a general way and it is that which thinks. Its function is thinking. The fundamental distinction between it and the others is that the five sense-consciousnesses, since they engage only in the direct experience of their objects, can only experience the present. The sixth consciousness on the other hand can and does think about things. The sixth consciousness thinks of the past, both the distant and recent past. It thinks about the present and it thinks about the future, both the proximate and distant future. But while it is capable of thinking it is not capable of directly experiencing things the way that the sense-consciousnesses do. The sixth consciousness does not directly experience things. It generates a generality or abstraction on the basis of the things that are experienced by the five sense consciousnesses. This means that when the five sense consciousnesses experience something, it becomes an object of thought for the sixth

consciousness, not in the form of what is actually experienced but in the form of a conceptual generality or generalization or abstraction that is created by the sixth consciousness as a duplicate or replica of what was experienced by that particular sense-consciousness. For example, when I look at the glass that is on the table in front of me, my eyes directly see that glass, but my sixth consciousness, my mental consciousness, does not directly see it. It generates a generality or abstraction based upon what my eyes have seen, which it then recognizes, thinks about, thinks of as good or bad, or having such and such shape and so on.

To further explain, for example, the mental consciousness doesn't produce a vivid perceptual image when a name of a person is mentioned; rather, a general form and name of that person just appears to this consciousness upon hearing the name. So it is called "a conceptual consciousness that apprehends the sound and the object in a manner of mixing them together." When we say that the sound and the object are mixed, we mean that the label and the meaning are combined or the name of something and the thing itself appear in a mixed fashion. For instance, for the bell in front of me, the name "bell" is not an inherent part of the thing in front of me; it is just a name that is given to the object. However, the mental consciousness apprehends these two as mixed, the image of the object I see and the label "bell."

The seventh consciousness is the afflicted consciousness (Skt. *klesha-mana* Tib. *nyön yid*). It is not strongly afflicted by disturbing emotions; it is just not clear. So it refers to the subtle or most basic level of mental affliction or klesha. This does not refer to coarse kleshas but to the root of kleshas. Specifically, the afflicted consciousness is the subtlest level of fixation on a self. So the nature of this seventh consciousness is to conceive something as self. Again this is not coarse fixation on a self. This is the subtle level of fixation on a self that is unfluctuatingly present even when one is asleep. The conception of self operates in a twofold way. First of all, the sixth consciousness conceives self, thinking "I." It thinks so in a very clear way. However, the sixth consciousness is not stable. It thinks about other things. It goes here and there and gets involved with all kinds of different objects and when it is involved with other sorts of things, it is not thinking

"I," and it forgets about self. However, whether or not we are thinking directly about self, we never forget self; the conception of self is always there. This is because the mental consciousness operates with the seventh consciousness that is always conceiving self, which is the second way. When sometimes you have a sense of self and you think "I," that is not an operation of the seventh consciousness. That is the sixth consciousness thinking. The seventh consciousness is present until you attain the levels of an Arya, or Superior, such as the first *bodhisattva level* and so on. Although it is not directly observable itself, it is the basis for all coarse fixation on a self and therefore for all coarse kleshas.

The first seven consciousnesses operate in conjunction with the eighth, the alaya consciousness.[36] These eight consciousnesses are appearances only for oneself; they do not appear for others. Therefore they are uncommon appearances or states.

The Feelings

Another uncommon state of sentient beings would be various feelings, such as those of pleasure and pain or happiness and suffering that occur in body and mind. Generally speaking, there are three different types of feelings: pleasant feelings, unpleasant feelings and neutral feelings. In terms of mind, there is first a pleasant feeling (such as joy, admiration or liking for something) and the unpleasant mental feeling of something as disagreeable and unattractive. Thirdly, one might experience something as neither pleasant nor unpleasant, but just have a sort of in-between feeling. Similarly, the body has three feelings: those of pleasure, those of pain and a neutral feeling that is neither pleasant nor painful. We can also categorize these feelings into five groups: pleasant feelings as one; displeasure as the second and, pleasure and pain for body as three and four, and then a neutral feeling of body or of mind as the fifth type of feeling. These feelings are uncommon appearances or uncommon states because they are not shared with or by other sentient beings.

We say that all phenomena are "just mind" and there are two types of appearances of mind: those that are shared with others, and those that are not shared with others. Uncommon or unshared

appearances would include the unpleasurable feelings associated with death and birth, and all the personal feelings we perceive in samsara.

Common appearances are like mountains and buildings. Unshared appearances are much easier to understand than shared appearances because we think that common appearances really exist as external phenomena. However, they do not exist apart from our own mind and thus the text teaches that they are not external phenomena.

What is the reason why such common appearances are said to be "just mind"? The way in which such apparently common appearances are seen is that they appear to the individual mind of individual sentient beings. That which appears for our own mind is not known by others and that which appears to or for the mind of others is not known by ourselves. So, although the appearance is similar, it is not something that can be known by another person in the way that it is known by oneself. And except for this similarity, it is not actually the same.

A Practical Exercise

Presently people are very worried and anxious because there is the great danger of a war breaking out in Nepal. So, considering the experience of pain, pleasure and a neutral feeling, let us meditate for a while. The way in which we will meditate at this point is called "meditation having the observation of pleasure and pain and neutral feeling." We imagine all sentient beings in front of us and through the medium of the breath, we visualize our own happiness to be replaced with the suffering of others. At this juncture, the main point is understanding that the disturbing emotions of attachment, hatred, pride and so forth are the cause and the effect is fear. So as our breath goes out, we imagine that light rays of love and compassion go forth and strike other sentient beings. Those sentient beings then experience love and compassion and the absence of fear. The light rays return to ourselves on the in-breath and with that breath, we draw in the fear and the disturbing emotions of others, so that they become free from such fear and disturbing emotions.

We said that all appearances are mind with there being common or shared appearances among sentient beings and unshared appearances.

It is easy to understand that the uncommon appearances are just mind. However, it is more difficult to understand that external phenomena, the common shared appearances, those phenomena that appear to be shared, are just mind. It is difficult to generate certainty and a knowledgeable understanding of that easily and quickly. There is no fault in not being able to do that easily and quickly. When I first began to study, I had difficulty with this point.

c. Clearing Away Doubts

Previously, we discussed the views of the four different schools (the Vaibhashika, the Sautrantika, the Cittamatra, and the Madhyamaka). I explained the way in which external phenomena are first shown to be merely aggregations of small partless particles. Then, those particles themselves are refuted and demonstrated to be just appearances of mind. Then the mind itself is shown to be empty. Here I wish to further elaborate on the differences of the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika schools.

The Vaibhashika school holds that external phenomena are aggregations of particles and those aggregations of particles make up the objects that are perceived by consciousnesses. The internal consciousnesses are generated based upon the sense powers, so that the internal consciousness looks at and sees an external phenomenon. In this way we have a presentation of something inside that looks at and perceives something outside, which in general accords with the common way of thinking.

The Sautrantika point of view on this matter is different. They point out that the internal consciousnesses have a nature of luminous clarity and awareness, whereas external phenomena have a nature or character of being material and thus the definitive character of the two is extremely different. Since their character is so different, it is not that one thing looks directly at another; rather the external object serves as a cause and the internal consciousness is the effect of that cause. The relationship between cause and effect is that they are not simultaneous; rather, the cause goes before and the effect comes later. Therefore, the

object and the consciousness that perceives the object don't occur simultaneously, but rather their relationship is that the cause is said to be the benefitor and the effect is said to be that which is benefited.

So, in this way the perceived object and the consciousness have the aspect of cause and effect. In the first moment, the object and the internal sense-power aggregate meet; in the second moment, the internal knowing consciousness is generated in the aspect of the object. In that way, the consciousness and the object do not actually meet directly.

In the Sautrantika school's way of explaining the process of perception, the appearance itself is explained as an appearance of mind. However, the cause of the appearance is said to be the external, material phenomena that have the nature of being established as particles. In their explanation, the appearance is an appearance for individual consciousnesses, for individual mind. Then the Mind-only school goes a step further and says, if there were in fact no particles serving as a basis for it, then that would be correct.

The Sautrantika school's view is between the Vaibhashika and the Cittamatra view and explains the way in which appearances are merely mental phenomena. It serves as an intermediate step that is somewhat easier to understand and in regard to which certainty is easier to come by.

External Appearances are Just Mind

The objection is raised to the view that all appearances are mind. This is due to it being possible for one person to apprehend the mind of another person directly, and that when one person apprehends another person's mind directly, it is not a case of apprehending something that is just an appearance of one's own mind. This is an example of the apprehension of something that is not an appearance of one's own mind.[37]

The response to this argument is twofold: in one we are talking about the perception of another's mind within meditation and in the second case we are talking about the perception of another's mind not within meditation. When not in meditation, perceiving another person's mind is a case of one's own thought appearing in the aspect of another

person's mind. The perception of another person's mind in meditation is when one perceives another person's mind through the force of one's own meditative stabilization and the other person's mind appears as a reflection. The reflection of another's mind appears in an aspect that is similar to it. So, it is an apprehension of the reflection or likeness of another person's mind, not a case of seeing another person's mind directly.[38]

Internal Events are Also Empty

The discussion then proceeds to demonstrating the emptiness of internal consciousnesses and reviews the argument given before that the emptiness of the external phenomenon entails the emptiness of internal consciousness. For example, if there is a spot of blue, then a consciousness apprehending that spot of blue is produced. If there is no external spot of blue, then no such consciousness of the blue spot will be generated. In this way, the generation of an internal consciousness is shown to be dependent upon the external phenomenon. So if there is no external phenomenon, then there is no internal consciousness. So if we establish external phenomena to be empty, then internal phenomena must also be empty. In this way, we come to realize the nature of phenomena or what is called dharmata.

Not recognizing the emptiness of phenomena is the cause of suffering. If we have a strong belief in external phenomena, this leads us to regard external phenomena as either good or bad. If we feel that the external phenomena are good, then we develop strong attachment to these external phenomena. If we regard external phenomena as bad, then we develop a strong aversion to them. This leads to further suffering. However, if we understand that external phenomena are not solid from the very first, then both the cause of suffering and the resulting suffering will be naturally pacified.

D. Freedom from Perceiver and Perceived

17. If what appears as perceived does not exist,
Whatever appears as perceiver does not exist;
Due to this, there is also a rationale
Behind the breakthrough to freedom from this appearance
Of perceived and perceiver, because without beginning
A volatile state prevails; and because duality's
Not existing at all is what really exists.

There are many different kinds of emptinesses discussed in the Buddha's sutras. On one occasion the Buddha spoke about four different types of emptiness. In the *Heart Sutra* it says "there is no form, no feeling, no perception... no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue... no consciousness," and so forth; everything is empty, all phenomena lack inherent existence.

The Buddha's sutras say that phenomena are empty, but apart from saying that they are just empty, no reasons for this are given. From just reading the sutras, it is difficult immediately to arrive at a definite idea of the meaning of such statements. Therefore, many learned persons have given reasons that allow us to understand why phenomena are empty.

The main logical argument for emptiness is the reasoning of dependent arising that was set forth by Nagarjuna. He explained that all phenomena depend upon one another and because of this they are not truly established.

We can illustrate this dependent relationship in terms of an example. I am holding up two sticks. One is four inches long and the other is two inches long. We say that there is "a long one" for the four-inch stick and "a short one" for the two-inch stick. When we think of these sticks, we think "this stick is long" and "that stick is short." If we take a third stick which is six inches long and remove the two-inch stick, we see that the stick that we used to see as the long one, now has become the short one. Previously, it was long, now it is short. The reason for this is that the stick wasn't inherently long to begin with; our mind just attributed the quality of "long" to it because it was next

to a shorter stick. Then when we put the three of them together, there is a short one, a long one and the one in the middle, which seems to be neither short nor long. In fact, "short," "long" and so forth are just designated or imputed by our mind; they don't exist (or we could say "are not inherent") in the object itself. This is not limited to "short" and "long" but it also applies to "big and small," "good and bad," "beautiful and ugly," "above and below," "east, south, north, west" and so on.

Another example would be that there is no direction that is really east and no direction that is actually west because these directions depend upon the relationship between objects. For instance, we talk about the east and the west. The east refers to Asia and the west refers to Europe and the Americas. But if we ask, "What is the reason for saying that Asia is the east and Europe and the Americas are the west?" There isn't any reason whatsoever. East and west are just designated or imputed by our mind. In this way, all these sorts of phenomena turn out to be mere conceptual formulations. However, some people would say, "Well, that's all well and good when we are talking about comparative qualities, but that doesn't apply to things existing on their own, for instance a house, a building, or a body which is made out of particles. Dependent arising doesn't apply there."

If we were to consider a particular example of a "solid" object such as our hand, we see it and other people see it. But really, where is it? If we were to divide and classify the hand, then we would see that there is a thumb, a first finger, a second finger and so forth; there is flesh, skin, bone and so on. Where, then, is the hand? Well really, there is no hand. How is it that "hand" comes about? It is in dependence upon the various fingers, the flesh, skin, bones and so forth that we designate or impute something, to which we give the name "hand," but in fact, "hand" is not substantially existent. This does not only apply to one's hand. It applies to one's right hand, one's left hand, legs, head, all external phenomena. Whenever we investigate and analyze, we discover it is merely the gathering together (the collection or aggregation) of many different things, which we conceive as "a large thing." However, that thing is merely designated or imputed by our own mind. The Buddha expressed this fact by speaking of the emptiness

of outer phenomena, the emptiness of inner phenomena, and the fact that these phenomenon are not truly established. In fact phenomena is not validly existent; external and internal phenomena are empty of inherent existence.

If things are empty, does that mean that nothing is apprehended whatsoever? No, that's not what it means. This is not a refutation of appearances per se, rather it shows that even though there is nothing that is in itself "long," nevertheless if there is something in relation to it that is short, something is said to be "long" and something is said to be "short." This dependent relationship also applies to self and other. Even though there is no self, because we think "other," we automatically think "I." And even though there is no "other," it is created by thinking "I." We could also apply this to mountains, the "near" mountain and the "distant" mountain. One mountain is near and depends upon another mountain being further away. Another mountain is far away in dependence upon another mountain being nearer.

Thus, dharmata or how things really are is not empty in the way that space is just empty; rather emptiness allows phenomena to appear. And within the nature of emptiness, phenomena arise. This then shows us how conventional phenomena or appearances that we perceive, and the ultimate lack of inherent existence (emptiness) fit together. Thus, conventional, dependent appearances and the lack of inherent existence or emptiness do not contradict one another.

There is unceasing appearance of both inner phenomena and outer phenomena and therefore many sorts of different appearances dawn because of strong predispositions or latencies. If we discuss this in terms of experience, we could consider the example of a dream. Various sorts of phenomena appear in a dream, but are they what they seem to be? No, they are not, nevertheless they do appear. If we dream an elephant, it clearly appears to us, but there is no real elephant in the room with us. This is an example of the way in which conventional appearances arise even though they do not really exist.

We first begin to understand dharmata or "the nature of phenomena" intellectually, then we meditate upon it and finally it becomes manifest. Since the nature of phenomena is naturally peaceful, therefore when we realize it, our own disturbing emotions diminish

and cease and suffering that ordinarily comes about from external and internal phenomena is eliminated. So, this is why it is extremely important and necessary to understand emptiness of external and internal phenomena.

Questions

Question: In meditation practice, if we have thoughts of love and of benefiting others that are only in our own mind, that are only uncommon appearances, how can they possibly benefit anyone else?
Rinpoche: Such meditation, such cultivation of love and compassion, does not directly benefit other people; rather through meditating in that way, one's own love and compassion increase. The potency or capacity of one's own love and compassion becomes stronger. Through becoming stronger it enters into all of one's behavior, whether by way of body, speech or mind one's behavior becomes pervaded by love and compassion. When that happens, then one can actually help others. For that reason, we cultivate love and compassion in meditation.

Question: I asked Tai Situ Rinpoche if it is possible to do the *tonglen* practice over time and space for people who are dead, and he said yes. Would you explain how that is possible?
Rinpoche: Generally speaking, the main purpose of this practice of tonglen or "sending and taking" is to increase love and compassion in our own mind and to abandon the wish to harm others, together with envy, aggression and so forth. When we do the practice of sending and taking, some people generate great hope and fear about it. People think that through giving away all of their own happiness and drawing in the suffering of others, they will indeed end up with immeasurable sickness and hardship. Others have great hope in regarding their companions, parents, loved ones; for instance, at a time when such a person becomes ill, they think that they can extract that illness from them and draw it to themselves. In that way they have great hope. However, neither such hope nor such fear is purposeful, necessary or to the point. The main point of sending and taking meditation is the cultivation of our own mind, developing a pure motivation, fixing,

healing or repairing our motivation and intention, making it something extremely pure and developing a great force of love and compassion and the wish to help others. If we do this, it is not the case that if we were to develop such a motivation there would not be a benefit for others; rather gradually there would be a great benefit for others, if we had such a motivation.

For example, if someone had the wish and intention to go to Lhasa, Tibet, although some circumstances might make it possible to go, other occasions or circumstances might make it not possible to go; nevertheless, having such an intention we could eventually go to Lhasa. However, if we had no such intention at all, then we would not go. Similarly, if we have a pure motivation to help others, then whether or not we are able to help them in a particular way, nevertheless in the end, through cultivating such an intention, the fruition will eventually be achieved and we will finally be of great benefit for others.

Sometimes a person who has a very determined good thought or kindness is indeed able to help another person directly. For instance, there is a story of the great master Atisha, who at one point in his life had a disease in his hand. He said to his student Dronden that if Dronden were to take Atisha's hand and hold it in a particular way, his hand would be restored to health through doing the practice of sending and taking. Atisha told Dronden, "The reason why you will be able to do so is that you have extremely great kindness." So, it does happen that there could be direct benefit of a temporary sort with sending and taking practice.

Question: Rinpoche, you made two logical arguments and I was unable to follow them, although I heard what you said. If a patch of blue really existed, then necessarily the internal consciousness would exist. Maybe you could say something about that?

Rinpoche: If blue exists, then there is a consciousness apprehending blue. If form exists, then there is a consciousness apprehending form. If the object that is apprehended is true, then the consciousness apprehending that object will be true. However, if the object (let us say a form) is not a true object, then the consciousness apprehending it similarly will not be a true consciousness. That conventional,

deceptive consciousness is not something that is true. It has to do with the relationship between the perceived or apprehended and the perceiver or apprehending consciousness. In Tibetan they are linked quite closely, they say that one is the object and the perceiving consciousness is called "the object possessor," indicating the relationship between the two. If the object is false, then that which bears the object similarly is false. Does that make it clear?

Question: Yes, but why is the apprehending consciousness necessarily false?
Rinpoche: If the seed or cause is true, then the effect or result will be true. If the seed is false, then the fruit will similarly be false. In this case, since the object is false, then its result or its fruit, the perceiving or apprehending subject, is similarly false.

Question: We all have the same true nature, which is dharmata. At the same time we are part of phenomena. We have no self, but at the same time we create our own individual karma. Why is this?
Rinpoche: We speak about what is called "the way or manner of abiding" and "the way of confusion" or "the way of error." As for the way of abiding, there is no self; there is neither a self of persons nor a self of phenomena. However, in the way of confusion, one is confused about persons and about phenomena, thinking that there is a self of persons and a self of phenomena. In that way, within confusion one becomes involved in various sorts of actions and creates various situations of happiness and suffering. However, this is taking place within confusion. For instance, in a dream one might dream of an elephant or dream of a horse and become frightened or become delighted. Is there actually an elephant or is there actually such a horse? Well, in terms of the way in which things abide, there is no elephant, there is no horse. But in terms of the way in which they appear, most certainly, one does dream of an elephant or a horse and there is an appearance of an elephant and a horse. So, in the context of waking life, there are various sorts of actions and there are various effects or fruits of actions. Do such actions and their results dawn or appear? Yes, they certainly do. Are they true?

No, they are not true. Will we realize their lack of truth in the future? Yes, most definitely.

Question: In the way things abide, everything is the same?
Rinpoche: Yes.

Question: If everything is the same, why is there duality and variety?
Rinpoche: There are various kinds of mistaken appearances for mind; however, there is no particular reason for those appearances; there is no very good reason for them, there is no great reason. If one were to say, why did this elephant appear in this dream? There is no particularly good reason why an elephant appeared in a dream.

Question: If there were something that existed but did not appear to anyone's mind, how would one know that there is nothing that exists that doesn't appear to anyone's mind?
Rinpoche: What is the reason for thinking that there is something that doesn't appear to anyone's mind?

Question: What would constitute the existence of such a thing?
Rinpoche: Well it would have to be established in some way as separate from one's mind. What would qualify as evidence of something existing despite its not appearing to anyone's mind would have to be established as something apart from mind. That would be sufficient evidence. However, there isn't any such thing. No matter what there is, it only happens in the context of appearing to one's mind. It is because of appearances to mind that one engages in conversation. It is because of appearances to one's mind that one engages in various activities. Whatever we look for, it is purely an appearance to mind. In brief: If there is no appearance, then there is no working; i.e., nothing happens.

Question: If something really existed, there would be no deception. I am thinking from a dualistic perspective, thinking about the perceiver and the notion of flawed human perception. I am wondering what Rinpoche would say about that?
Translator: When you say flawed human perception, are you speaking

about the mechanism of sensory perception?

Student: Yes, and interpretation.

Translator: That is the distinction I am trying to get. Are you talking about non-conceptual sensory activity or are you talking about conceptual activity? This dictates the way that I have to ask the question and why I am pursuing it. I need to be precise. Whether there can be objects that don't appear to consciousness or you are asking about truth and deception, this is hard.

Student: I guess I am connected with the argument that if something really existed, then there would be no deception. Maybe I am postulating the fact that deception of whatever could come from a flawed way of perceiving, a process, a part of a human condition but not necessarily.

Translator: Okay, I will ask Rinpoche a very traditional example. What about a person with bad eyes seeing falling hairs in front of them.

Rinpoche: Yes. For instance, a person who has cataracts would have a perception of what looks like hair falling. In fact, this is mistaken and there are no falling hairs that are established in the way that they appear to be established, that exist in the way that they appear to exist. In that way, the appearance is deceptive. Deception does not come into what is true. Deception comes only into that which is mistaken, like for instance those falling hairs. Once there is a mistaken or erroneous appearance, then one's mind is deceived.

Question: According to the Buddhist point of view, if a non-Buddhist were to assert true existence, what would that assertion be? What would that assertion necessarily contain within it?

Rinpoche: We Buddhists say that all phenomena are not inherently established and we affirm this lack of inherent establishment as the way in which things abide. Others assert that phenomena do exist truly, inherently, by way of their own nature, and from that point of view they are mistaken. However, this does not mean that every last thing that they have to say is useless; there are many things that are presented and are quite useful, such as skilful means (Skt. *upaya*), methods that are helpful in a variety of ways. However, from the point

of view of asserting a self when there is, in fact, no self and asserting true existence when, in fact, things lack true existence, they are mistaken.

Question: What does it mean to say that something exists externally?
Rinpoche: Something existing externally would mean that it is not just an appearance for one's own mind, it is not just an aspect of one's own mind, it is something other than one's mind. It exists somewhere apart from that. Buddhists generally, and here we are particularly talking about the Mind-only school, say that phenomena are just mind and particularly in the division of the Middle-way school called "empty of other" say that things do not exist apart from one's own mind; they do not exist elsewhere, separately. However, people tend to think that they do. Despite thinking that phenomena do exist apart from one's own mind, in fact, such does not occur. If one looks for phenomena somewhere else, one will not find them. The reason why one will not find them is because they do not exist.

Question: Do the phrases like "appearing to the mind" or "appearing for the mind," mean the same as the phrase "appearances being mind"?
Rinpoche: I think those statements have the same meaning. Generally when we are speaking of the Mind-only school, there are two different aspects to that. One meaning of mind only is said to be "mind only in the sense that there is no other creator" and the other meaning of mind only is said to be "mind only in the sense of there being no other appearances." So mind only in the sense that it is one's own mind that creates things, it is not something else that creates them, and secondly, mind only in the sense that apparent or appearing objects are not other than one's own mind. Those are the two aspects of mind only. The first, speaking of no creator that is other than mind, refers to the fact that it depends upon afflictions or disturbing emotions that one engages in actions. Actions accumulate predispositions or latencies. Latencies give rise to appearances and appearances produce feelings of pleasure and pain. Thus, there is no creator that is other than one's own mind. The second means straightforwardly that those objects that appear to various consciousnesses are just mind; they are not something other or separate from those perceiving consciousnesses themselves. In this

discussion, we are talking about the second of those two, the assertion that appearances are just mind. The different phrases "appearing to mind" or "appearing for mind" aren't said differently in Tibetan; those statements on the one hand and the other statement saying that "appearances are mind" mean the same thing.

Question: Is it living within the envelope of one's own alaya in the various appearances?
Rinpoche: Yes, it's like that.

Question: How can there be any common appearances at all?
Rinpoche: In this text on differentiating dharmas and dharmata there is a discussion of appearances that are common and appearances that are uncommon. I don't need to say a whole lot about uncommon appearances; we already understand that they are uncommon. As for common appearances, what are called "common appearances" refers to the fact that they seem to be common.
Translator: At the end I said something about the stupa.
Rinpoche: There is a stupa; we all see a stupa out there. I see a stupa, other people see a stupa, and you see a stupa. Since we all see it, we say, "There's a stupa there." The stupa that I see is an appearance of a stupa for my mind and the stupa that other people see is an appearance of a stupa for their mind. And the stupa that you see is an appearance of a stupa for your mind. So, there are these various appearances that are common or similar. We say that this comes about through similar actions, whereby similar sorts of predispositions have been accumulated, in dependence upon which similar sorts of appearances come about. To give an example: If somebody has jaundice, then they look at a white conch and it appears to be yellow. If a second person also has jaundice, they also look at that white conch and see that it appears to be yellow. If a third person who has jaundice looks at it, then it appears to be yellow for him too. So, all of these people who have jaundice look at a white conch and it appears to be yellow; they all see a yellow conch. Then a fourth person who doesn't have jaundice looks at it and sees that it is white. Now you have one person who sees a white conch

and three people who see a yellow conch. Who is right? Who is to say what is true in this case? Well, in fact, it's white, not yellow.

Question: But how can you assert that it is white? If it is just an appearance of the mind, then how can you say that one is right and the other is wrong? It is only an appearance. There is no true existence to the white conch either.

Rinpoche: The discussion of the conch is not a discussion of true existence or the lack of true existence. It is a discussion about the appearance of white and the appearance of yellow. In using examples to illustrate a point that is difficult to understand, it is necessary not to confuse the example with the point exemplified by the example. So, in the example one is discussing, using the example of jaundice in the way in which it affects perception of color, as a way to indicate how appearances vary for different individuals. Now, even within the example the fourth person does not see the appearance of a yellow conch that appears to the first, second and third persons. The first person does not see the appearance of a white conch that appears to the fourth person. Each person sees that which appears for themselves. When I see, for example, that stupa, there is an appearance for me. I don't see the appearance of the stupa that appears to another person's mind; rather, just as through having a similar illness there comes about a similar misperception of the color of something, I see the appearance that appears to me. This is an example that is given in terms of the world, in terms that are acceptable to the world. The world already understands that if a person's eyesight is affected by an illness, then the illness is going to affect the way things will appear to that person. So, we are giving an example of something that is beyond the world in terms of the world. We are saying that similarly, there is something that is beyond that, beyond that which through the accumulation of various latencies, predispositions, impressions and so forth which remain with the mind, there come to be similar appearances such that I see a stupa, you see a stupa, and other people see a stupa. But, in fact these are just individual appearances for the minds of individual persons.

Question: I didn't really understand what you were saying about direct perception of another person's mind, whether one is in a state of meditation or whether one is not in a state of meditation. Would you give an example?

Rinpoche: The difference between the two is that the apprehension directly of another person's mind within meditative equipoise is as an aspect of one's own samadhi, one's own meditative stabilization. Whereas the apprehension of another person's mind not from within meditative equipoise, its way of appearing, is just a likeness or a reflection of one's own mind.

Question: Would Rinpoche give an example? I can't quite grasp the meaning.

Rinpoche: An example of not being within meditation would be the way various appearances dawn within a dream; that is an example of what it is like for just an aspect or a reflection of mind to appear as something. An example of something from within meditative equipoise would be like the way, when one practices meditation, one has various sorts of experiences; it would be something like that.



Chapter Four
A Detailed Examination of Dharmata

Dharmata of the Sutra Tradition

The understanding of dharmata can be gained either by the sutra tradition or the mantra (Vajrayana) tradition. In the sutra tradition, to abandon passion, aggression, conceptuality and so forth, emptiness is first taught. Next, it is pointed out that this emptiness is not a mere nothingness, but that it has a quality of *luminous clarity* (Tib. *salwa*).

As we have discussed already, there are a variety of ways of indicating that external and internal phenomena are not inherently existent. One procedure is to demonstrate that external appearances are not established and, since external appearances do not exist in the way that they seem to, therefore the consciousnesses that apprehend these external phenomena and take them to truly exist are also false and are therefore not truly established either.

Another approach is presented by the Middle-way school using the logical arguments of dependent arising and the arguments of phenomena not being one or many. Thus, it is shown that all external

phenomena and internal mind do not exist by their own nature, rather they are inherently empty. This reasoning is called the Rangtong tradition or "empty-of-self school." In this way, all phenomena are found to be empty and through a path of reasoning we arrive at a definite knowledge of phenomena as empty. By first generating a definite belief that phenomena have the nature of emptiness, and joining that with the practice of meditation, this definite knowledge becomes gradually more and more clear, until we arrive at a direct perception of emptiness. Proceeding in this way is extremely good; however, it takes a very long time.

While it is true that all impure phenomena have the nature of emptiness, this emptiness is not a voidness or a mere nothingness, in which nothing whatsoever exists. Rather, it has the nature of luminous clarity, which is the basis for a Buddha's wisdom (Skt. *jnana*), for the development of a Buddha's omniscience. Emptiness is the ability for all phenomena to appear and to be realized. Therefore, in the sutras and in the treatises it is referred to as "an emptiness that is endowed with the supreme of all aspects," meaning that it is suitable for all phenomena to appear, suitable for all phenomena to be known.

In the context of fruition, this state is called "a Buddha's wisdom." In the context of ordinary, unenlightened beings, it is called "Buddha-essence (Skt. *sugatagarbha*) or "the essence of the sugata" and is thus regarded as a capacity or potential. This view of the Middle-way is referred to as the "empty-of-other school" or Shentong tradition which contrasts with the previous discussed Rangtong tradition.[39] This factor of luminous clarity is somewhat easier to meditate upon and therefore the Shentong view is referred to as "that which joins the sutra and mantra traditions."

Dharmata of the Mantra Tradition

In the tantra or the meditation in the Vajrayana, we do not realize emptiness through the path of reasoning, but rather we take direct perception as the path of meditation. This is done without considering whether external phenomena are empty or not, because it is difficult to meditate upon the emptiness of external phenomena. The

Vajrayana path emphasizes examining internal mind and looking directly at this mind.

This mind is regarded then as being the form of dharmata itself. As for the mind's way of abiding, if we were to look, it would be easier to realize the nature of mind than the nature of emptiness presented by way of the path of reasoning. It is relatively easier to understand and to realize that mind is not just a "dead" emptiness, but rather that it has with it this factor of luminous clarity.

If we look for the ear consciousness, we don't find anything; rather there is simply emptiness and the factor of luminous clarity. Similarly, with the nose consciousness, that which experiences smells, and the tongue consciousness or the body consciousness, if we look for them they can't be found, rather there is just emptiness and luminous clarity. What about the sixth or mental consciousness which has all kinds of thoughts and conceptions of good and bad, liking and disliking and so forth? When we look, there are indeed all kinds of thoughts and discursive activities. However, if we look for those thoughts themselves, or for the mental consciousnesses themselves by asking, "Is it inside the body? Is it outside the body? Is it somewhere in-between? What is its form? What is its color or shape?" and so forth there is nothing to designate and say "Aha, that's it." There's nothing that's found, there's nothing that's seen. Why? Is it because we are not capable of finding such a thing? Is it because we don't know how to look? No, that's not the reason. It's because those thoughts have no nature of their own. Is it because our mind has somehow gone completely blank? No. Because the mind can realize things, therefore this sixth mental consciousness is itself a union of emptiness and luminous clarity.

In terms of the sutra path, one proceeds by way of reasoning. In terms of the mantra or Vajrayana, one proceeds by taking direct perception as the path; arriving at a realization of the union of emptiness and luminous clarity and practicing in that way. Thus, Gampopa, said, "To know definitely: Look at your own mind." This is to say that if we look somewhere other than our own mind, we will not find the authentic view. If we look for the nature of our own mind, then we will find the authentic view, that is, luminous clarity, emptiness, and

peacefulness, that which is called "the mind's way of resting." That indeed is the view and what our mind is.

IV. The Detailed Explanation of Dharmata

A. An Overview of the Six Points

18. Through introducing traits and a ground at all times,
Definitive verification as well as encounter,
Recollection and immersion into its core,
This six-point approach to pure being is unsurpassed.

In this text, the nature of dharmata is taught in terms of six points or six meanings, in terms of which one is able to enter into or engage in dharmata. The six points are: (1) the definitive traits, (2) the ground, (3) definitive verification, (4) encounter, (5) recollection, and (6) immersion.

B. A Detailed Explanation

1. The Definitive Traits

19. The defining traits in brief are just as they are.

The first aspect of dharmata is "the major or definitive characteristics of dharmata." The definitive characteristic of dharmata, or one could say, the nature of phenomena, were described earlier. The characteristics of dharmata have four particular marks or aspects:

- First it is free from an apprehended object,
- second there is no apprehending subject,
- third there is nothing that is expressed,
- and fourth there is nothing that expresses.

What is the meaning of these four aspects? In many different places the Buddha said that all phenomena are empty; however, just saying that isn't sufficient. If one were to ask, "Does that word 'emptiness' indicate accurately and fully the nature of phenomena, the way in which phenomena abide?" No, it doesn't. "Does "luminous clarity" point out fully the way in which phenomena abide?" No, it doesn't. Does "wisdom" point out accurately the final nature of things?" No, it doesn't. There isn't a word that can properly describe dharmata. For that reason it is said that dharmata or the true nature of things is inexpressible, meaning that no matter what word one uses, one cannot express dharmata just as it is. If one attempts to think about dharmata, then it cannot be thought about accurately by the mind of an ordinary person. For that reason it is said to "have passed beyond the sphere of the minds of ordinary persons."

For instance in a sutra in which Manjushri asked the Buddha, "Do phenomena exist or do they not exist?" The Buddha replied by remaining silent. Some scholars have said that in saying nothing the Buddha indicated that the true nature of things is not something that can be expressed in speech.

On other occasions dharmata is referred to as "the object of the activity of each individual person's self-knowledge." Taking this phrase apart, the Tibetan is *rang-rig* or "knowing itself," which means that one looks at one's own mind, not somewhere else. When it says that it is that way for each individual person, it means that it is not an external thing that someone else can point to and say, "Oh, there it is. It is over there." Rather, it is something that each person has to see for himself. The person has to look at the nature of his or her own mind or this dharmata. It is not something that can be shown by somebody else.

So, dharmata is characterized in terms of these four aspects: (1) it lacks anything to be perceived; (2) it lacks a perceiver; (3) it cannot be expressed; and (4) it is nothing that expresses.

2. The Ground

20. The ground consists in the whole of phenomena
And supreme teachings, the whole of the sutra collections.

The second aspect of dharmata is called "ground" or "location" or where we can find dharmata. Dharmata pervades all of samsara and all of nirvana. Dharmata is found in every single phenomenon. This is where dharmata is to be found in terms of objects of expression. Then in terms of expressors, the way of abiding is found and taught in all of the sutras of the Buddha.

The teachings of the Buddha are very vast and extensive, nevertheless if we summarize, we can say they have been gathered into what are called *three turnings of the wheel of dharma*. In the first turning, the Buddha emphasized the teachings for the hearers (Skt. *shravakas*), where he presented methods for realizing the way in which phenomena exist. In the second turning, the Buddha emphasized the teachings on emptiness and presented methods for realizing the way in which all phenomena exist, which is the dharmata. Then in the third turning, the Buddha emphasized Buddha-essence (Skt. *sugatagarbha*), the union of wisdom and emptiness, and the methods for realizing the way of abiding (which is the dharmata). Thus, dharmata is discussed in all of the scriptures of the Buddha.

3. Definitive Verification

21. The term "definitive verification of this"
Refers to the whole of the path of application,
Comprised of appropriate mental cultivation
Based on the sutra collections of Mahayana.

The third aspect of dharmata is called "definitive verification." This is a discussion of the *five paths* (Skt. *marga*), the first of which is called "the path of accumulation." On the path of accumulation one principally listens to and thinks about the meaning of the

Buddhadharma, and comes to understand its meaning. The next two paths are called the "path of application" and the "path of seeing." At this point one meditates upon the meaning that one has heard, thought about and understood previously and one realizes the way in which phenomena exist. Therefore, this is called "definitive verification."

4. Encounter

22. The encounter attained because of authentic view
Is the path of vision, on which the suchness attained
Is in a fashion direct, whatever experienced.

The fourth aspect of dharmata is called *rigpa* in Tibetan. Rigpa has several meanings and the meaning of the word here is really just seeing, knowing, understanding. This is related to the third of the five paths, "the path of seeing." By bringing what one has learned in the first two paths into the practice of meditation, gradually one's knowledge becomes clearer and clearer, until one arrives at a direct perception of dharmata. If one proceeds on the sutra tradition, one goes by way of an ascertaining consciousness or definitive knowledge to the point of it turning into a direct perception of dharmata. If one proceeds on the Vajrayana path, one's introduction to the way in which all things abide becomes direct perception. One then meditates in terms of that experience and arrives at seeing or knowledge, which is the name of this fourth point; i.e., one knows and one realizes just how phenomena actually abide. This is the point of achieving the genuine view.

5. Recollection

23. Although reality **has** *been seen by awareness,*
Recollection – the path of meditation,
Comprised of factors inducing enlightenment –
Is needed to eliminate the stains.

The fifth aspect of dharmata is connected with the fourth "path of meditation." What is explained here is how one practices subsequent to the path of seeing. One practices in terms of remembering, recollecting or mindfulness of what one has realized or experienced at the path of seeing. Rising from this direct realization of the dharmata, one knows that one has realized it, and this recollection or mindfulness of dharmata is the understanding of dharmata. However, one does not just remember it or think about it or be mindful of it; rather, one meditates again and again and again, realizing dharmata in a direct manner. One progresses gradually towards enlightenment through such practice, abandoning the phenomena that are contrary to enlightenment.

6. Immersion

24. Here, immersion into its core complete,
Is suchness rendered free of any stain,
Where all appear exclusively as suchness –
And this completes the transformation as well.

With the recollection of the fourth path, one arrives at the fruition. This is the sixth aspect of dharmata and is called "thorough transformation." One word within the Tibetan says it is somewhat as if one has changed the place where one dwells, in the sense that first of all one began dwelling in samsara, among impure phenomena, but one has transformed that; leaving the impure behind, one dwells in the pure. That is the sense of thorough transformation of one's place. The actual name here, though, refers to the possibility of such a transformation. The point then is that the impure has been abandoned, the pure has been achieved and one sees the very nature of the dharmata. Having seen and then meditated upon it, one arrives at realizing dharmata as undifferentiable from one's self. In fact, it has always been undifferentiable from one's self but has not been realized as such. Now one has realized dharmata as undifferentiable from oneself and that

undifferentiability has become manifest. So, this then is referred to as "immersion into dharmata."

In *The Uttaratantra* it says, "Sentient beings are Buddhas; however, this is obstructed by the adventitious stains." "Adventitious" means that it doesn't need to be there, it doesn't dwell in the very nature and so one can separate from it. So these adventitious defilements prevent Buddhahood, and when they are cleared away, one arrives at dharmata, without being polluted or blocked by any defilement whatsoever. This is a thorough transformation and refers to achieving the final rank.

That explains the nature of thoroughly changing one's place and what it means to change one's place completely and thoroughly. An extensive explanation of transformation in ten points then follows in the next chapter.

Questions

***Question*:** Would Rinpoche explain the difference between the alaya consciousness according to the Cittamatra and Shentong view?

***Rinpoche*:** The alaya consciousness that is explained by the Cittamatra or Mind-only school is presented as the basis for impure, samsaric appearances. It is said that if there weren't any such thing, then there would be no basis for phenomena to dawn; there would be nothing that could serve as a basis that would cause or enable various sorts of appearances to dawn. Therefore, the Mind-only school says that there must be such an alaya consciousness, a mind-basis-of-all; it must undoubtedly exist and, in fact, it must be a truly existent phenomenon.

The Middle-way empty-of-other school (Shentong) does not have such a conception. What they say is that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence; there is no phenomenon, not even a single one, that is not empty of inherent existence. So all phenomena are empty. But that emptiness is not a mere nothingness, rather it is endowed with the capacity for a Buddha's wisdom, the potency or capacity for a Buddha's omniscience, and in that way it is the essence of a Buddha's all-knowing or omniscient awareness. It is therefore called "the sugatagarbha" or "the essence of the sugata" ("the essence of the one who has passed into bliss"). It is not just some vapid or dead thing;

rather, it is a suitability for exalted knowing. That's the difference between the Mind-only school's view and the view of the Middle-way empty-of-other school. The difference comes about by way of the one (Mind-only school) not having realized emptiness fully and the other (Middle-way school) having realized it fully.

Question: Can Rinpoche please elaborate on luminous clarity?
Rinpoche: When we speak about luminous clarity, we are not really talking about light, rays of light. We are not really talking about anything terribly profound. It just means the ability to know and understand that whatever there is can appear and can be seen, heard, smelled and understood. This quality of luminous clarity refers to the ability for things to appear and to be known. It's not something that's a long way off. If you start looking for this knower, this luminous and clear entity, you don't find anything. But, it's not a long way off. It's very close. It's directly right there. It can be meditated on in that way.

Question: Rinpoche described having understanding and joining that with meditation. In particular, in the fifth stage he described what you call "recollection of experience or realization." Are there times when it's recommended to have more meditation than other times? Are there stages on the path where it's more appropriate to meditate more intensely?
Rinpoche: There are two different sorts of occasions. There is what is called "meditative equipoise" or "setting the mind equally and evenly, in a level fashion within meditation." For instance, the path of meditation is achieved at the point of the mind arriving one-pointedly at a direct perception of dharmata, within such placement of the mind evenly and in a level manner within meditation. Then there is post-meditation, where one is subsequently mindful of what has been realized and engages in various sorts of activities, working in the world. As for discriminating for oneself – when it is important to do which – if it is possible for one to do something that is beneficial for others in terms of one's work and actions in the world, when one can do that, then one does so, and practices mindfulness of the view in terms of subsequent recollection. When it becomes apparent that it would be

possible for one's experience to progress, to go further, to go to a higher level, then that's the time to focus on meditation.

Question: We speak of *chö* and *chö nyi*, dharma and dharmata in sutra, and about *sem* and *sem-nyid*, mind and mind's nature in the Vajrayana or mantra tradition. Since in sutra we speak about the differentiation of dharma and dharmata, would it be okay in the mantra tradition to discuss *sem* and *sem-nyid*?

Rinpoche: It is not mistaken, but there is not a whole lot of discussion or purpose in discussing it that way. What is the difference between sutra and mantra? In the mantra Vajrayana tradition, one is not concerned with a great deal of explanation of things, rather it is a matter of joining directly to meditation. Rather than bringing inferential cognition into the path, one takes direct perception as the path, one brings direct perception to the path. So, there wouldn't be a purpose or need for trying to set out carefully just what *sems* means and just what *nyid* means. In the context of sutra, one is not talking so much about internal mind, rather one is talking about external things; one is trying to understand or settle, to develop a path towards the true nature of such things, the difference between the way things appear and the way they actually exist. Thus, the analysis and discussion that are presented in the sutras and the texts commenting on them are joined principally to external things rather than to discussing the nature of mind per se. So, if one is focusing upon meditation, one considers and brings direct perception into the path. In the context of hearing and thinking, one considers and brings inference into the path. Generally therefore, even though there is nothing wrong about discussing the differentiation between mind and mind's nature, *sems* and *sems-nyid*, there is not a lot of purpose in doing it.

Question: How does one know that there is a dharmata that is not just some sort of uncommon appearance?

Rinpoche: Dharmata is something that has passed beyond, transcended, gone further than either common appearances or uncommon appearances. If one approaches this from the point of view of reasoning, it is through seeing that both common appearances and uncommon

appearances are not established. They do not exist in the way that they appear; i.e., one discovers that their nature or their entity is emptiness. In terms of meditation, if one looks within meditation directly at one's own mind's way of abiding and sees that, then this is not something mistaken. In the context of meditation, one knows. The realization of dharmata is not a dawning of an appearance of any sort. It is something that has passed beyond that.

Question: How do we know that the realization is not deluded?
Rinpoche: When one meditates, various sorts of experiences come about, this, that and the other. Sometimes they are quite pleasurable, different sorts of things appear and are seen. However, those sorts of things are just occasional or temporary. What we are talking about here is something called "the mind's way of abiding"; i.e., something that goes through all of that. One sees that the mind is luminous and empty and this is not something that is made by one's own mind; rather, in seeing it, one has a definite knowledge of that. This is called "introduction to the nature of mind." It's not just some sort of experience that comes along. It is seeing that which actually abides as the nature of mind.



Chapter Five
The Transformation of Dharma into Dharmata

B. The Detailed Explanation of Transformation

A. An Overview of the Ten Points

25. This ten-point presentation of transformation
Provides an unsurpassable introduction,
Because it is the way to approach the essence,
Ingredients and individuals,
The special traits, requirements and ground,
Mental cultivation and application,
The disadvantages and benefits.

The custom of expositions such as this is first to give a brief overview of the topic and then to give an extensive, detailed explanation. In the previous section there was the brief overview of the nature of the thorough transformation of state. We now give an extensive explanation, going through ten points serially: (1) the essence of the transformation, (2) ingredients of the transformation, (3) an individual's

transformation, (4) traits of the transformation, (5) realizing what is required, (6) the foundation (ground) for the transformation, (7) mental cultivation, (8) the levels through application, (9) the disadvantages of no transformation, and (10) the benefits of transformation. Since everything said in the brief indication is then explained extensively in the following section, I think it is all right just to skip the brief indication and go directly to the extensive explanation.

B. A Detailed Explanation

1. The Essence of the Transformation

26. The essence of transformation is introduced
As suchness freed of stain, and what that means
Is superficial stains appear no longer
And that which manifests is now the suchness.

The first aspect of dharma into dharmata is the nature of this transformation of our state from an ordinary person into an enlightened being. In *The Uttaratantra* the word "tantra" refers to the continuity of the Buddha-essence that is gradually purified from the state of an ordinary sentient being to that of a bodhisattva to that of a Buddha. *The Uttaratantra* says that a Buddha's wisdom exists in all sentient beings; however, it is not manifest. It does not manifest because of the adventitious defilements, which have the quality of being temporary and are not part of or the nature of Buddha-essence. The defilements are the disturbing emotions such as attachment or passion, aggression or anger, and ignorance.

The Uttaratantra describes Buddha-essence (Skt. *sugatagarbha*) in three aspects: that present in ordinary sentient beings, in bodhisattvas, and in Buddhas. In the first, impure state of an ordinary being, we are saturated with disturbing emotions. When some partial purification has taken place, then we are at the state of a bodhisattva. And when complete purification has taken place such that the disturbing emotions have been abandoned completely, then that is the state of a Buddha.

An example of this process would be like the sun first being completely obscured by the clouds so that it is not seen at all. As the layer of clouds becomes thinner, then sunlight becomes slightly stronger or slightly manifest. Finally, when the clouds have been burned away completely, the sun is seen brilliantly and brightly. Similarly, the Buddha's wisdom and the *dharmadhatu*[40] or "the sphere or element of reality" is first not seen at all; later it is seen slightly, and finally, when all stains have been cleared away, it is seen completely in all aspects. Just as the clouds are not part of the sun, so the disturbing emotions are not part of Buddha-essence. So whether we refer to this as sugatagarbha or dharmata, gradually the nature of this thorough transformation comes about.[41]

2. Ingredients of the Transformation

27. To introduce the ingredients, or contents:
Awareness in the form of the vessel shared
Undergoes a transformation to suchness;
The sutras undergo a transformation
Into the suchness, the actual dharmadhatu;
And beings' awareness-components not shared in common
Undergo a transformation to suchness.

This second aspect of the transformation of dharma into dharmata concerns three topics: outer, various names that are given, and inner. These three topics have an implied order of body (appearances), speech (terms) and mind (thoughts).

☸ First of all, there are external forms that are shared in common. This is parallel to a previous discussion about the nature of external phenomena, which are common or shared among various sentient beings, and those that are uncommon or unshared. With regard to those that are shared, we are speaking about the world that we inhabit as the container, with external phenomena such as mountains and buildings making up the conventional world that serves as a container.

These external conventional truths all possess this quality of dharmata. As for the way in which such things exist, the way these various conventional truths abide is by the dharmadhatu, which is the lack of inherent existence.

☸ The second topic is that of the terms and meanings. The Sanskrit term "dharmadhatu" (Tib. *chö ying*), can be translated as "the expanse of reality" or just "the expanse of dharma." The meaning of the term *dhatu* in Sanskrit and *ying* in Tibetan is that it cannot be stopped by anything and pervades everything. A comparison from among ordinary sort of phenomena is space because space is something that cannot be obstructed at all, so that it is possible to go absolutely anywhere. Similarly, the nature of this dhatu or expanse is a suitability for whatever good qualities might exist to come into existence, to be generated, and a suitability for whatever faults exist to be abandoned. Since it is not an impure expanse but rather a pure one, it is referred to as "the expanse of dharma" or dharmadhatu.

In the situation of the impure, we have various sorts of names, words, letters and so forth that are the means of expressing various meanings; they are the signifiers of that which is to be signified or the expressor of that which is to be expressed. However, the nature of such impure phenomena (names, words and so forth) is a lack of inherent existence. In the context of that which is final, then, we understand the dharmata as manifesting as the various sutras, treatises and so forth, teaching emptiness or dharmata itself.

☸ The third topic refers to various sorts of internal phenomena, particularly the various elements within sentient beings such as the eight consciousnesses. What is indicated is the way in which impure, internal phenomena can be transformed into a Buddha's wisdom.

Although there are no divisions within dharmadhatu itself, we can make various divisions in terms of conventional phenomena. In terms of conventional phenomena, we classify dharmata into three different divisions: the external, shared phenomena; speech that expresses and that is expressed; and internal phenomena of various unshared states of consciousness.

In terms of the final effect, Buddhahood has three internal divisions:

– The *dharmakaya* or "truth body,"

– The *sambhogakaya* or "complete enjoyment body,"

– The *nirmanakaya* or "emanation body."[42]

The dharmakaya refers to the way in which all phenomena exist. The sambhogakaya is slightly coarser, and the nirmanakaya is so coarse that it can be shown to all sentient beings. If we relate these to the three aspects of dharmata, the shared phenomena – the vessel and by force of that, everything appearing as bodies – at the point of the complete manifestation of dharmata, in terms of a thorough transformation, is the attainment of the dharmakaya. Next, by having undergone complete and thorough transformation, the various sorts of expressive terms (speech) and expressed meanings (as exemplified by the sutras) manifest as the sambhogakaya. The nirmanakaya refers to the factor of luminous clarity, awareness and knowledge of the mind (the eight consciousnesses). The transformation of these is a transformation into a manifest state as a nirmanakaya. Thus, if we are speaking about dharmata in terms of the result achieved at the final state, there is the manifestation as the *three kayas* or "three bodies of a Buddha."[43]

3. An Individual's Transformation

28. The approach as related to individuals:
The first two of these are transformations to suchness
Pertaining to Buddhas as well as to bodhisattvas;
The last of these pertains additionally
To Shravakas as well as Pratyekabuddhas.

The third aspect of the transformation of dharma into dharmata is concerned with the activity of the three Buddha bodies or kayas.

❁ The first, the dharmakaya of a Buddha, is accessible in the sphere of activity only of a Buddha. Why is that? This is because the

dharmakaya is the manifest state of the complete and thorough transformation being utterly free from everything that is to be abandoned. It is a state in which all the good qualities have become manifest. For that reason, it is an object for the activity only of a completely enlightened person, a Buddha.

Thus, the dharmakaya is spoken of as "the fulfilment of one's own welfare," in that one has abandoned everything that is to be abandoned and one has generated all good qualities completely. Is the dharmakaya all that is needed? No, because one must achieve the welfare of others. Therefore, the dharmakaya by itself is not enough but needs to be able to display a form to other sentient beings. Therefore, there is the display of the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya. Because these last two kayas have an aspect of form, they are called rupakayas or "the form bodies."

☸ The sambhogakaya is displayed to those who have pure action or pure karma, namely, the bodhisattvas. So the sambhogakaya reveals itself to the pure bodhisattvas. So, by way of the sambhogakaya the welfare of bodhisattvas can be accomplished. However, this also isn't sufficient because a Buddha needs to manifest to ordinary or impure beings.

☸ Therefore, to help others who have impure karma, the nirmanakaya manifests. Thus, in order to teach students who are in an impure state, various emanation bodies or nirmanakaya forms are displayed.

In terms of teaching those who are in an impure state or have impure action, it would not be suitable or particularly beneficial to teach them the extremely profound dharma, so ordinary beings are taught the provisional meaning. Thus the nirmanakaya emanations teach the paths of the Hinayana to shravakas and pratyekabuddhas.

4. The Traits of Transformation

29. The introduction to traits especially advanced
Pertains to Buddhas as well as to bodhisattvas:
The distinguishing trait of totally pure domains;

That which is gained through attaining the dharmakaya;
Sambhogakaya; as well as nirmanakaya –
The insight, instruction and consummate mastery –
Are attainments distinctively greater comparatively.

The fourth aspect of transforming dharma into dharmata discusses the change of dharma into dharmata at the highest level of this transformation. Generally speaking, when we are discussing transformation it means a transformation from an impure state to a pure state. Now we are discussing the point of having arrived at a pure state, by way of the first four of the five paths (the paths of accumulation, application, seeing and meditation), gradually the state is thoroughly transformed until one arrives at what are called the pure bodhisattva levels (the eight, ninth and tenth levels). So, what is being taught in this topic is principally the pure levels of a bodhisattva and the purification of the Buddha-field.

The three bodies of a Buddha teach or give dharma, enabling the transformation from the impure to the pure state. Thus, one arrives at the point of having the capacity to teach the excellent dharma to those students who are to be trained, and in that way to enable their release from samsara.

5. Realizing What is Required

30. The introduction to realizing what is required:
The distinguishing factor of previous wishing prayers;
The distinguishing factor of Mahayana teaching
As focal point; and the further distinguishing factor
Of effective application to all ten levels.

The fifth aspect of transformation of dharma into dharmata is the purpose of this thorough transformation of our state. It goes back to our wishing prayers (Tib. *mön lam*), and particularly, our former aspirational prayers that we be able to accomplish the welfare of ourself and the welfare of all other sentient beings as well. Beginning with the

first bodhisattva level up to the tenth bodhisattva level and then finally to fruition (which is Buddhahood itself), we gradually achieve our own realization and we are able to help others as well. We arrive at the point of being able to teach the great vehicle or Mahayana and in that way to achieve that which we have longed and had a great hope for. Our wish has now been realized and we can actually truly help both ourselves and all other sentient beings as well.

The sixth aspect of the transformation of dharma into dharmata is very detailed so we will discuss this in the next talk.

Questions

Question: Are there various intelligences within dharmakaya or is it one big mind?
Rinpoche: In the various sutras and treatises there are many different ways of teaching this, there are different ways of talking about it. On some occasions it is said that there is just one entity of wisdom and on other occasions it is said that there are various or different entities of wisdom. There is a reason for speaking about it in different ways. When it is spoken of as being one entity of wisdom or one nature of wisdom, that is from the point of view that within dharmakaya there is no discrimination between self and other. However, it would not be accurate to say that there is utterly no possibility of difference or no difference because indeed there are individual Buddhas. We speak about the 1000 Buddhas of the fortunate aeon; i.e., there are the Buddhas of the past, the Buddhas of the present, the Buddhas of the future and so forth. From that point of view there is individual wisdom.

Question: When you talk about the 1000 Buddhas of this fortunate aeon, are you speaking more from the level of the understanding of relative truth?
Rinpoche: When one speaks in that way about the 1000 Buddhas of this fortunate aeon, what is being emphasized here is the emanation body or nirmanakaya, whereby the welfare of sentient beings is accomplished. However, that is not to eliminate the existence of such

within the realm of mind, in fact, within the entity of exalted mind there are these various bodies of wisdom.

Question: Would it be correct to say that the dharmadhatu is the expanse in which the dharmakaya manifests?
Rinpoche: The word *ku* in Tibetan, kaya in Sanskrit, "body" in English, indicates a form such as a form of a human being that is displayed, dawns or appears. In Tibetan we distinguish between an ordinary word for body and an honorific term for body. This word *ku* being the honorific term, we say that. In fact, when one speaks about the gradual manifestation of the effect or fruit, one talks about it in terms of the achievement of such bodies or kayas. However, what is this thing? In fact, it refers to the realization of the way in which all phenomena abide, the realization of dharmata. It refers to the manifestation of that manner of abiding. It refers to the abandonment of everything that is to be abandoned, all confusion, all mistakes whatsoever, the purification of ignorance and the full flowering of all good qualities. I think it would be suitable to say that the effect or fruit is indeed achieved within dharmadhatu.

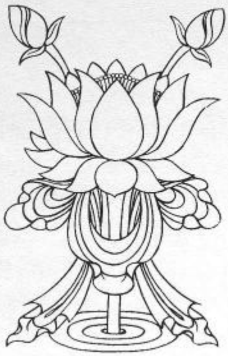
Question: It sounded as though sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya weren't natural or spontaneous things that came out of the dharmakaya. It sounded as though a person could achieve all those qualities, yet maybe they wouldn't be able to emanate, if that's the proper word, the nirmanakaya form. I thought it was a spontaneous, natural occurrence.
Rinpoche: There is no one who, despite having achieved dharmakaya, is unable to accomplish the welfare of others. Through realizing the dharmadhatu, the expanse of reality, the expanse of dharma, one has accomplished one's own welfare fully. This expanse of emptiness is, however, not a mere nothingness; rather, there is the factor of luminous clarity, in which the two forms of wisdom, the two aspects of a Buddha's wisdom manifest, dawn. Those two aspects are first of all what are known as the knowledge of the mode of phenomena, the knowledge of the way in which phenomena abide; i.e., the realization of the mode of abiding of all phenomena or realization of the final nature of all phenomena. Together with that there is the knowledge of the extent or

variety of phenomena; i.e., sentient beings, the various conventional phenomena that are endowed with or are the host for this quality of dharmata. One understands that knowledge of the variety of phenomena, one understands how confusion is born, the consequences of such confusion, the means for separating from confusion and the various stages one goes through as one gradually separates from confusion, then the fruition that is achieved at the point of having separated from such confusion. This quality of luminous clarity that is an aspect of dharmadhatu has three characteristics within it. These are the quality of knowledge, the quality of tender love, and the quality of potency so that it is possible to display the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya and to enter into such a display both naturally and spontaneously.

Question: If the Shakyamuni Buddha was a physical being, how is it possible for that physical being to function, for example to speak each word that is expressed as a choice of all the possible words that can be expressed? From the point of view of the dharmakaya, there is no basis for this distinction.

Rinpoche: Generally speaking, there are the two aspects of a Buddha's wisdom that I was just speaking about: the knowledge of the nature of phenomena or the mode of phenomena and the knowledge of the extent or variety of phenomena. There is a reason for that. In the context of the ultimate – i.e., the dharmadhatu – there is freedom from various distinctions. However, the dawning of appearances within dharmadhatu does not necessitate a change or transformation within dharmadhatu itself; rather, dharmas (phenomena) and dharmata (the nature of phenomena) abide together, they are equal. So, even though a Buddha knows dharmata, this does not entail not knowing the various phenomena that are endowed with the quality of dharmata. It does not entail that one does not know the extent of various appearances. In this way, various sorts of host of phenomena, so to speak, dawn clearly and are known without mixing them up, confusing one with another or any sort of mistake or error. Thus when we speak about the *five wisdoms* of a Buddha, we speak about the wisdom of individual realization, which refers to knowing each phenomenon distinctly and

clearly, such that one does not get confused in teaching, in giving oral instructions to others, and there is no mistake.



Chapter Six
The Foundation for the Transformation of Dharma into Dharmata

There are ten aspects of the transformation of dharma into dharmata. The first five were covered in the previous chapter and we will now discuss the sixth aspect of the transformation, which is non-conceptual wisdom in which wisdom refers to jnana (or *yeshe* in Tibetan).

6. The Foundation for the Transformation

a. An Overview of the Six Points

31. The introduction involving the ground or support
Is into original non-conceptual wisdom
As this is approached in a manner involving six points,
Since the focal requirement, attributes surrendered,
The correct way to apply the mind in practice,

The defining characteristics and benefits,
And full understanding are hereby introduced.

This verse is a brief summary of the whole topic of the foundation of non-conceptual wisdom and within this topic there are six different aspects or topics covered in the following detailed description: (1) The focal requirement, (2) abandoning unfavorable attributes, (3) stages of meditation, (4) defining traits of dharmata, (5) benefits of non-conceptual wisdom, and (6) thorough knowledge.

B. A Detailed Explanation

(1). The Focal Requirement

32. The first of these, the focal requirement,
Should be known to be introduced in four points,
Since what is required is Mahayana teachings,
Commitment to these, along with certitude
And fully completing the two accumulations.

The first of these six points of the foundation of the transformation of dharma into dharmata concerns that which we observe or the "focal requirement." To understand how we observe this non-conceptual wisdom, we need to study the Mahayana teachings, which is done in four stages.

☸ The first stage is to listen to, that is, to study both the words of the Buddha (the sutras) and also the commentaries (the shastras). After this, we need to engage in samadhi or "meditative stabilization" to thoroughly realize this non-conceptual wisdom. Thus, listening to, and thinking about the Mahayana dharma is presented as the cause.

As said earlier, the shastras are considered to be of greater importance than even the words of the Buddha and the oral instructions are of greater importance than the treatises. Others might think that the sutras, the words of the Buddha, would be most important; however,

the treatises are more important than the sutras. The oral instructions are more important than the treatises and that needs to be well understood.

☸ The second stage of this foundation is called "admiration or longing." Having listened to the Mahayana dharma, we begin to understand the nature of phenomena. We recognize that it is not just something we know, but rather that it is extremely profound, being the cause that helps us and all others. Throughly understanding this, we begin to have great admiration and longing for it.

☸ The third stage is developing a certainty of this non-conceptual wisdom. There is the need for such longing and admiration, but that alone is not adequate. In the sutras the Buddha gives the example of gold. We do not just accept a person's word that it is gold, but we must cut it, heat it and thoroughly analyze it before we accept that it is truly gold. Similarly, if someone says, "this is the word of the Buddha" we must analyze the teaching carefully determining if it is a provisional teaching or a definitive teaching. We have to study it carefully to gain a definite understanding of it. We must come to understand it without any doubt, and for that reason to develop this third stage is called, "giving birth to definite discrimination."

☸ The fourth stage of understanding non-conceptual wisdom is called "thoroughly completing the collections." Having listened to the teachings and having generated a longing for them and then having arrived at certainty of the meaning, we must practice, we must meditate, to develop a non-conceptual wisdom of it.

(II). Abandoning Unfavorable Attributes

33. The second, which treats of surrendering attributes,
Is also introduced by way of four points,
Since what is unfavorable and the remedies,
The suchness as well as the realization of this
Are attributes whose surrender leads the way.
By doing this in respective order as follows –

The coarse and the middling followed by those which
are fine,
And those which persist for a very long time indeed –
These attributes are surrendered entirely.

The second point for the foundation of the transformation of dharma into dharmata is abandoning or what is called "surrendering" that which is unfavorable. What needs to be abandoned is that which is contrary to non-conceptual wisdom. There are actually four things that need to be abandoned.

- First we need to give up attachment to "those things needed to be abandoned," which are mainly the disturbing emotions, because these emotions are contrary to non-conceptual wisdom. This is especially true for the disturbing emotion of ignorance which is the ignoring of the way phenomena really are.
- Second, we need to abandon attachment to the antidotes to the disturbing emotions. In order to place our mind in an unfabricated or uncontrived way within the true nature of phenomena attachment to even the antidotes themselves also have to be abandoned.
- Third, it is not adequate merely to abandon one's attachment to and conceptualization of objects such as desire and hatred or the antidotes to such objects of abandonment. But we must also abandon attachment to dharmata and conceptual discrimination with regard to dharmata.
- Having overcome conceptualization and attachment to the discordant phenomena, the antidotes to those phenomena, and suchness itself, we must fourthly abandon even the perceiving consciousness that realizes these things. Having realized suchness just as it is, having progressed along the various paths and having achieved fruition, one would still have attachment for the genuine view itself. So, one must abandon conceptualization and attachment with regard to the genuine view.

Having abandoned such apprehension of signs, even with regard to the actual view, then the non-conceptual wisdom can become manifest.

The Procedure

There is a procedure for abandoning these four different things, so this non-conceptual wisdom can manifest. The way we abandon these four things is done in terms of the most obvious or coarse to the subtlest, which corresponds to the four classes of attributes that need to be abandoned.

- First, we recognize the disturbing emotions as something to be abandoned. These are the obvious objects of abandonment and the easiest to abandon.
- Second, there are the remedies or antidotes to the disturbing emotions and they are not themselves false; rather, they are good qualities. We tend to regard them as important, so they are more difficult to abandon because of our attachment to them. These are regarded as a more subtle class of attributes to be abandoned.
- Third, there is suchness or dharmata itself, which is the way in which all phenomena exists. Our attachment to it is subtler and is very difficult to abandon being a very subtle attribute.
- Fourth, there is realization of dharmata, realization of the way in which all phenomena exist. Our conceptualization with regard to this realization and our attachment to it is extremely subtle and difficult to abandon. This attachment is extremely subtle and persists for a long time.

(III). Stages of Meditation (Authentic Application)

34. The introduction to practicing wisdom correctly
Entails the following four specific aspects:
Practice involving something to focus on;
Practice involving nothing to focus on;
Practice involving no subject to focus on;
Practice whose focus is nothing to focus on.

The third point of the foundation for the transformation of dharma into dharmata concerns how we actually apply ourselves to abandoning dharma for dharmata. The first two points (studying the Mahayana doctrine and abandoning unfavorable phenomena) tell us how to abandon everything that goes against dharmata. Now in this third point we will examine how we do this or "correct applications," which also have four stages.

- At the beginning we are not able to apprehend non-conceptual wisdom directly, so we must go by stages. So we begin at the first stage in which we focus on something, which is observing that all phenomena are just mind only. Is the observation of all phenomena as being just mind sufficient? No, it isn't sufficient by itself, therefore we must move to the second stage.
- In the second stage we do not focus our attention on anything specific; this is a practice involving nothing existing that could constitute a perceived object on which to focus. This is called the "application of nothing to focus on."
- In the third stage we not only don't focus upon anything but there is no longer even a subject, there is no observer in relation to something to be observed.
- Finally, in the fourth stage there is "nothing to focus on" which means we see dharmata just as it is.

We must realize that this progression of stages (from objects of observation being eliminated, then observing consciousnesses being refuted and passed beyond) does not lead us to a state of voidness of being like a stone. That is not what is meant. This last stage of observing dharmata directly is one of "complete illumination" or full intelligence and luminosity in which there is no darkness (or ignorance).

(IV). Defining Traits of dharmata

35. The defining characteristics here encountered
Should be known to consist of the following three aspects,

In the transformation of dharma into dharmata we (1) had to study the Mahayana teachings, (2) abandoned the unfavorable attributes, (3) entered into the stages of meditation, and (4) now in this fourth point we will discuss the characteristics of dharmata. We begin by giving three different aspects of being in dharmata.

- First we "abide in dharmata," which means we rest in an utterly uncontrived state.
- Second, we rest in a state "devoid of appearance," which means there is an absence of dualistic conceptions of "I" and "other," so there are no appearances. We are speaking about the state of meditation when placing our mind in an even, balanced, meditative state. At the time of the paths of seeing and, principally within the path of meditation, there is no appearance of visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes or tangible objects whatsoever; rather, only emptiness appears.
- Third, "appearances appear to us to be like illusions." Toward the end of the path of the pure bodhisattva levels (eight through ten) and then Buddhahood itself, appearances dawn as illusions and not as they did formerly, as real solid objects. Also indicated under this point is the arriving at Buddhahood itself, where there is a complete mixing of appearance and emptiness.

> *36. Since one effect is repose in pure being,*
> *Which means that one actually settles in pure being,*
> *The non-dualistic and inexpressible;*

Now to consider these three in more detail.

The first aspect of being in dharmata is called, "reposing in pure being." We are speaking about resting or dwelling in dharmata itself, in the way that dharmata actually abides. We are relying upon the sutra presentation, rather than the Vajrayana presentation. In the sutra tradition, we first determine just how all phenomena exist. With this definite knowledge, we gradually move into this samadhi called "a meditative equipoise." In this meditation we realize the emptiness of external phenomena and the internal mind. So, this is the way in which the definitive character of resting in dharmata is done.

37. And one effect relates to appearances' absence,
Where duality, assumption and formulation,
Faculties, objects, principles of awareness,
And vessel-like worlds' appearances are absent;
So these correspond to there being no observation,
No description, no ground and no appearances,
No principles of awareness, and no place,
Which is how the sutras express the traits
Defining original non-conceptual wisdom;

The second aspect of being in dharmata is called "devoid of appearance." This is a discussion of the absence of appearances at the time of non-conceptual realization. This is taught in terms of the non-appearance of the six objects or stages of perception as follows.

(1) The five doors. Because of the way our sense organs function, there arises a dualistic appearance of the object which is perceived and the perceiver. However, there is no such dualistic appearance by way of the consciousnesses that operate through the five doors of the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body.

(2) Mental consciousness. There is no appearance of the sixth, mental consciousness, which is conceptual.

(3) Sense powers. There is no apprehension of sense powers themselves, the physical bases that allow various consciousnesses and objects to meet.

(4) The five objects. There is no appearance of the five objects themselves (visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects).

(5) The six consciousnesses. The six consciousnesses themselves (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind) do not appear.

(6) The world and the beings. There is no appearance of the world, the vessel or container, and the essence or inhabitants who dwell within this world.

In summary, when we are able to reach a state where we no longer see or "apprehend" appearances, what we apprehend is their non-appearance within the nature of emptiness, their lack of any nature of their own. In terms of "no observation," "no description," "no ground," "no appearance," "no principles of awareness," in the root text, the

first that of of "no observation,"[44] means the absence of dualistic appearances or the absence of adding on something that isn't there. "No description" means the absence of any conceptual mind: being unable through speech ever to show them to someone else, one could not demonstrate them to others by saying this or that about them. The phrase "no ground" means they are without a source, in the sense that within meditative equipoise of non-appearance one understands the emptiness of the sense powers themselves, the sense powers that would serve as the sources for various consciousnesses. The phrase "no appearance" means the non-appearance of the six objects just discussed.

This discussion originates in a sutra by the Buddha, in which he demonstrates six ways in which there is no appearance within meditative equipoise. "No principles of awareness" points to the absence of the six consciousnesses when one has realized dharmata. Finally, the non-appearance of the world and its inhabitants points to the absence of a place, "no place" in the text: i.e., one sees from the point of view of the non-establishment of the world and its inhabitants. All six of these qualities are in the sutras of the Buddha.[45] We are in the discussion of the yoga of non-appearance or the yoga, which is without appearance. It is said that if one were to give an example, it would be like looking at the center of space.[46] That is the characterization of the yoga, that it is without appearance.

38. And one effect relates to appearances' presence,
Since experience of every phenomenon
Is equivalent to the center of open space,
And formations all are appearances like illusions.

The third aspect of being in dharmata is called "possessing appearance," in which we perceive all phenomena as being like illusions. Even though phenomena are empty, when we arise from meditative equipoise (Skt. *samadhi*), the yoga of non-appearance – i.e., during post-meditation – there is the arising of appearances. This refers to the apprehension of bodhisattvas, particularly at the times of the path of seeing and meditation. This means that at this level, having entered into the yoga without appearances, all phenomena arise in the mind as an illusion;

the appearances which seem solid and real to ordinary beings, appear as illusion to the bodhisattva at this level.[47] At the highest, tenth level, of a Buddha, we attain the wisdom of the nature of phenomena (Tib. *ji ta ba*) and the wisdom of the variety of phenomena (Tib. *ji nye pa*) by seeing how these phenomena appear to other sentient beings.[48]

(v). The Benefits of Non-conceptual Wisdom

39. The four points introducing the benefits
Include the complete attainment of dharmakaya,
Attainment of bliss which nothing can exceed,
Attainment of mastery over the power of insight,
And attainment of mastery over the power to teach.

The fifth point is the benefits of having realized non-conceptual wisdom. There are four such benefits.

❁ The first benefit that is achieved through non-conceptual wisdom is the dharmakaya in a complete form. In saying one accomplishes this complete form, there are two aspects. One is the aspect of abandonment and the other is the aspect or realization.

Abandoning refers to abandoning the obstructions of the disturbing emotions and also abandoning the obstructions to knowledge or omniscience. So two obscurations are abandoned.

Realization refers to achieving the two qualities of a Buddha's wisdom: the knowledge of the nature of phenomena and the knowledge of the varieties of phenomena.

❁ The second benefit is called "great happiness" (Skt. *mahasukha*). It is achieving a happiness that is greater than all others. Normally, the happiness that we have is quite changeable and not very stable. The great happiness or bliss that we achieve at this point is stable and unchanging.

❁ The third benefit is that one sees everything in an unerring way, thus it is said that one achieves mastery with regard to insight.

☸ Finally, after having achieved mastery with regard to insight, we are able to teach the correct path to others without teaching anything incorrectly or mixing anything up. So, the fourth benefit is that we achieve mastery with regard to teaching.

(VI). Thorough Knowledge

A. An Overview of the Four Points

40. The introduction to thorough understanding
Should be known to include the following four points:
A full understanding regarding the remedy;
A full understanding regarding the characteristic;
A full understanding regarding distinctive marks;
And a full understanding regarding the five effects.

This is the brief explanation of the four topics of what is called "thorough knowledge": (1) fully understanding the remedy, (2) fully understanding the characteristic, (3) fully understanding the distinctive marks, and (4) fully understanding the five effects.

B. A Detailed Explanation

(I) Fully Understanding the Remedy

41. What is to be understood as the remedy here
Is non-conceptualizing original wisdom,
Since perceiving phenomena, individuals,
An alteration as well as dichotomy,
Denial as well, when this is entertained,
Are five distinct forms of perception of non-existents
For which it is taught to comprise the remedy.

The first from among the four topics is the way in which the objects of abandonment are to be abandoned. This is done by the way in which something can serve as an antidote. This is discussed in relation to an antidote to the suffering we experience, the disturbing emotions and obscurations which are the source of negative actions in which we engage and which lead to suffering. What is it that could purify those? It is non-conceptual wisdom that can remove our confusion and is therefore the antidote to them.

How is it that non-conceptual wisdom serves as the antidote to our disturbing emotions and delusions of all sorts? It is like this; if we are trying to identify the root of all disturbing emotions, it comes about in this way. There are various sorts of mistaken appearances as samsara and confusion about those appearances. These appearances appear; however, these appearances are not actually established in the way that they appear. Nevertheless, through our confusion we conceive of them as real things, as truly existent things. For instance, we become attached to and generate conceptual discriminations with regard to external appearances and think this is desirable and that is not. Similarly, we incorrectly regard internal phenomena, such as our thoughts and feelings, as constituting a self. Therefore, we must abandon these misconceptions of truly existent phenomena and a self. What is it that serves as the antidote to those conceptions of a self and truly existent phenomena? It is non-conceptual wisdom that serves as the antidote to those conceptions.

We speak about something that is called "complete change." This is in the context of discussing the appearance of things, of their functioning, and the conceptions of those appearances as indeed being such things. When we conceive in that way, we are regarding the self and external objects as permanent in the sense of not changing from moment to moment. The misconception of believing phenomena are permanent is a great mistake and denotes great confusion. It is a conception of self. From that point of view, recognizing that phenomena are indeed changeable and impermanent is quite helpful in leading us in the direction of dharmata. So, it is helpful to recognize phenomena as impermanent rather than as permanent. Nevertheless, to conceive that phenomena are newly produced and then cease is to be mistaken

about their ultimate mode of abiding, their ultimate nature. Because in fact, the ultimate nature of phenomena is that they lack inherent existence. From that point of view, it is not accurate to say that they are produced at some point, have a nature of impermanence and later cease. To regard them as permanent and then impermanent is called "a conception of phenomena as changeable." This conception needs to be abandoned.

Generally speaking, there are "phenomena" or "host phenomena" and "dharmata" or "the nature of phenomena." We tend to regard these as being separate, different things. When we begin to understand that phenomena have the nature of emptiness, we may begin to regard conventional appearances and ultimate emptiness as being separate, as being different. If we regard the conventional and the ultimate as separate and being contrary to one another, we have not realized emptiness accurately. Thus this conception of phenomena and their nature being separate is a conception that is to be abandoned.

The next misconception that needs to be abandoned is called "deprecation," meaning that we take emptiness of inherent existence to mean utter non-existence. We do not understand that emptiness is a suitability for dependently arising phenomena to appear. This idea of emptiness being utter non-existence is a mistaken deprecation. The correct realization of the non-conceptual wisdom serves as an antidote to such a misconception of emptiness.

We have identified five different misconceptions to which this non-conceptual wisdom serves as the antidote. These are: (1) a self of phenomena, (2) a self of individuals, (3) the misconception concerning the change that phenomena undergo, (4) the misconception that the conventional and the ultimate are separate or different, and (5) the misconception that emptiness denotes utter non-existence. Now we move on to the second among the four topics of thorough knowledge or full understanding.

(ii) Fully Understanding the Characteristic

42. Fully understanding the characteristic:
A lack of the process of thought and correct transcendence,
Tranquilization, things in their composition,
And predetermination are the five
The exclusion of which is the concrete characteristic.

The second topic concerns the definitive characteristic of non-conceptual wisdom. Generally speaking, non-conceptual just means an absence of conceptuality; however, there are a variety of ways in which it can be understood. So this topic tries to clarify what non-conceptual wisdom is and also gives examples of what non-conceptual wisdom is not.

There are many different states that are regarded to be non-conceptual or free from mental activity. However, not all of those states are wisdom. For example, there are mental states free from grasping and conceptualization that are not states of non-conceptual wisdom. Here the text indicates five; in particular, what someone might mistake or take to be the meaning of non-conceptuality and freedom from grasping and conceptualizing activity. Something other than these five is what is intended here.

❁ The first characteristic of non-conceptual wisdom is called "no mental application." What this refers to is states in which there is an absence of a very coarse conceptuality. This conceptuality is one in which a person is involved with various sorts of conventional designations that are set up by the world: i.e., conceptions that mix names and objects. For instance, an infant lacks that sort of conceptuality. In the books it says, "conception that regards terms and objects as suitable to be mixed;" by "terms" is meant various names for things and by "objects" is meant various sorts of functioning things in the world. Coarse conceptuality functions in this manner: it seems fine to put the name of something and the thing together, to just sort of paste them together. Now, a small child does not have such

conceptuality, but the absence of that sort of conceptuality is not what is meant by non-conceptual wisdom.

☸ The second characteristic of non-conceptual wisdom is called "correct transcendence." By practicing tranquility meditation, we can develop "the four concentrations" that are the aspects of the form realm. In the first concentration we pacify a rough sort of examination called "investigation." To achieve the second concentration we pacify a more subtle type of examination called "analysis." From the second concentration onwards, we have pacified that sort of rough and subtle investigation and analysis respectively; they have been pacified and we have passed beyond them. However, that does not amount to the non-conceptuality we call "non-conceptual wisdom" on this occasion. The meditative concentrations and this non-conceptual wisdom are different in nature.

☸ The third characteristic called "thorough pacification" might be mistaken for non-conceptual wisdom. What is indicated here are various states in which conceptuality has ceased as if it had been knocked out. For instance, when we enter into a very thick or deep sleep, there is very little conceptuality. However, such deep sleep is not what is meant by non-conceptual wisdom. Similarly, there is a meditative state that is called "the meditative absorption of cessation" in which one enters into a completely mindless state. It's as if consciousness has completely stopped; there's no factor of luminous clarity whatsoever, as if one's mind has just been cancelled. However, that's not what is meant by non-conceptual wisdom, because non-conceptual wisdom realizes the way in which all phenomena abide: i.e., the dharmata, and the above mentioned states are not a case of realizing that dharmata.

☸ The fourth characteristic that might be taken to be non-conceptuality is various things that are indeed non-conceptual, for instance, visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes and tangible objects such as stones and buildings. Indeed, these phenomena have no conceptuality, but that's not what is meant by non-conceptual wisdom which has the nature of prajna or "intelligence." Non-conceptual wisdom has a factor of luminosity or clarity, whereas material phenomena don't have this.

❁ The fifth mistaken understanding of non-conceptuality is called "predetermination" or "a conception of manifest signs." For example, when the Indian master Kamalashila traveled to Tibet to debate with the Chinese master Hashang, he found that Hashang was telling his students, "I teach a sudden path. Up to this point you have been practicing a gradual path, but this sudden path that I'm presenting is better. The way it is better is like this. Whether you have white clouds in the sky or black clouds in the sky, they both block the sun. Similarly, whether you have virtuous thoughts or non-virtuous thoughts, both are obstacles and for that reason this is the meditation that you ought to practice," Hashang was saying to abandon all thoughts, virtuous and non-virtuous, whatsoever. If we were talking about the practice of Shamatha, then what Hashang taught is fine. However, there is no aspect of Vipashyana or "insight" in that kind of meditation because underneath is the conception, "I must hold my mind without any thoughts whatsoever." Non-conceptual wisdom has passed beyond that state entirely.

So the non-conceptual wisdom that we are describing is non-conceptual in a rather different way from the five different non-conceptual states just described. All of these five do indeed satisfy the mere meaning of non-conceptual, but they are not non-conceptual in the sense of wisdom because wisdom passes far beyond such states, since those states have not realized the dharmata. Non-conceptual wisdom is a direct perception, a realization of dharmata, not just some sort of cessation in the way material phenomena are non-conceptual.

(III) Fully Understanding The Distinctive Marks

43. Completely understanding its marks refers
To its being free of conceptualization as such,
To the fact that it is not transitional,
To its not remaining while being there all along,
And its hallmark of being completely unexcelled;
These make up its five distinctive marks.

There are five superior features of non-conceptual wisdom:

☸ First, it is free of conceptualization. It does not involve any conception of samsara as something that is to be abandoned and nirvana as something that is to be taken up. Rather, non-conceptual wisdom has transcended these conceptions.

☸ Second, it is not trivial. Rather, it is realization of the final nature of all phenomena, realization of how all phenomena exist, and thereby it enables the discarding of what is to be abandoned and the realization of whatever is to be realized, the completion of all good qualities. In that way, it is not trivial.

☸ Third, it does not abide in any extreme of existence – i.e., samsara – nor any extreme of peace – i.e., nirvana. It is not a case of being confused and therefore bound in samsara nor is it a case of being frightened and therefore seeking release into nirvana. It is not covered by any of those faults; rather, it is the source of great benefit to all sentient beings. It is said that non-conceptual wisdom does not abide either in existence or in peace.

☸ Fourth, it is stable. Non-conceptual wisdom has not been manufactured by one's own mind, and from that point of view the fourth feature of superiority is, it is said to be steady or stable: i.e., having realized in this way the way in which all phenomena abide, one does not later fall back into confusion. In that sense, when we regard the dharmakaya as the fruition or effect, we can say that it is a permanent entity or permanent nature in the sense that there is no falling back from it into confusion.

☸ Fifth, this non-conceptual wisdom is not surpassed by anything else. It is not the case that when one has arrived at such non-conceptual wisdom there is some further destination to which one needs to go; rather, this is the final accomplishment and there is nothing else that needs to be accomplished; there is nothing beyond it.

So, these are the five features of distinctive superiority of non-conceptual wisdom.

(iv) Fully Understanding The Five Effects

44. The last, the full understanding of its effects,
Includes its lasting effect on conceptualization;
Its affording unsurpassable happiness;
Its effecting elimination of obscurations –
Afflicted emotions and cognitive obscurations;
The original wisdom attained in the wake of this
Provides the access to every aspect of knowledge;
It enables achieving attunement with Buddha-fields
And thorough maturation of sentient beings,
And brings about revelation and transmission
Of knowledge which is complete in every aspect;
These five are the special features of the effects.

The fourth topic of non-conceptual wisdom is called "the activity of non-conceptual wisdom." Having realized the dharmata our confusion is overcome and our conceptuality is cast far away; i.e., it is just destroyed. When we talk about the way in which various causes lead to effects we talk about five different types of effects.

☸ The first effect of overcoming conceptuality is called "an effect that is made by a being" in somewhat the way that a craftsman could actually make something, so there is some similarity in that this non-conceptual wisdom simply destroys conceptuality. From that point of view, one could regard the abandonment of conceptuality as an effect that has been made by a being.[49]

☸ The second effect of this non-conceptual wisdom is called "unsurpassable happiness," which is happiness that is beyond change. In an ordinary way we have various experiences of happiness and pleasure; however, they deteriorate and then suffering comes, so there is a great deal of change. However, when one has separated from conceptuality by way of non-conceptual wisdom, then one's mind does not fluctuate. From that point of view, one has achieved an unsurpassable happiness and unsurpassable pleasure. Because it is the very nature of the situation, because it is a nature that is itself pleasant, it is said to be a dominant effect from among these five types of effects.

❁ The third effect is the elimination of obscurations. Having realized the way in which all phenomena exist and having given birth to non-conceptual wisdom, then those phenomena that are to be abandoned are indeed abandoned and one's obscurations with regard to the dharmata are overcome. From that point of view, it is said that the obstructions to knowledge or the obstructions to omniscience have been overcome; one has separated from them. Obstructions to omniscience (*cognitive obscurations*) on this particular occasion mean dualistic perception, conceiving things, conceiving of existent phenomena. From that point of view, we could say that all of our thoughts whatsoever, all of this conceptuality is an obstruction to knowledge or obstruction to omniscience. In dependence upon such conceptions coming forth in a much more coarse or gross way, this leads to the more coarse conceptions of various sorts of afflicted states (disturbing emotions or kleshas) or the obstructions to liberation. However, this non-conceptual wisdom destroys both of these obstructions, the obstructions to omniscience and the obscurations to liberation. It enables one to part from them. From that point of view, in our discussion of different sorts of effects, this particular effect of non-conceptual wisdom is called "separative effect," in the sense that these twofold obstructions are abandoned through the force of that wisdom.

❁ The fourth type of effect is called "an effect that accords with the cause." This non-conceptual wisdom sees dharmata and by way of that non-conceptual wisdom abides inseparably with phenomena and knows their final nature; it sees dharmata. It sees all objects of knowledge and, as we saw before, this is in the manner of the two aspects of a Buddha's wisdom, wisdom knowing the nature or mode of phenomena and wisdom knowing the variety or extent of phenomena. So, from this point of view of seeing the nature of all phenomena and abiding inseparably with them in this way, it is said to be an effect that accords with its cause.

❁ The fifth effect is the function, the activity of this non-conceptual wisdom, called "thorough ripening." This is in the sense that by way of this non-conceptual wisdom one purifies the Buddha-field in which one will become a Buddha and teach sentient beings.

This does not just purify such a Buddha field, but it ripens sentient beings who have faith; it naturally ripens them. Moreover, it brings sentient beings into the good path of the dharma in the sense of bestowing the dharma to sentient beings. Thus, from this point of view it is said that this non-conceptual wisdom has the three qualities of purifying, ripening and completing the welfare of sentient beings. This is what "thorough ripening" means.

Questions

Question: When one directly realizes the ultimate, does that mean that conventional phenomena just become non-existent or go away?
Rinpoche: As for conventional appearances, for beginners indeed when in this state of meditative equipoise in which the mind is set evenly, fully and in a balanced manner upon the ultimate, such conventional appearances do disappear. However, when the dharmata has become fully and completely manifest, they do not. Finally, just while things are empty they appear and right when they appear, just when they appear, they are at that time empty. If it were not that way, then it would be the case that emptiness on the one hand and appearance on the other were contrary. Are those two contrary? No, they are not. It is thus not necessary that the dawning of one entails the disappearance of the other. Temporarily as one is moving along the path that is the state, but in the end no, they dawn together.

Question: Are the states of Shamatha not to be confused with non-conceptual wisdom when it comes to investigation and analysis? Would you say something about what is being investigated and analyzed and faults that can arise?
Rinpoche: There is a factor of investigation and analysis in all conceptuality. In the sutras it is said that investigation is *togpa* and analysis is *jöpa*. The former, which is called "investigation," is of a very coarse sort. An example of that would be from a distance you are not sure whether something is a pile of stones or whether it is actually a human being; it's hard to tell. You are way off and wonder, "Is it somebody or is it just some stones that look like a human being?"

That's what we mean by coarse investigation. Whereas, detailed analysis means coming up closely and looking very carefully, saying, "Well, is it or isn't it?" The sort of meditative stabilizations or samadhi, which we are speaking of in this particular context (the states of concentration starting with the second concentration on up from there) are free from such coarse investigation and detailed analysis; rather, one simply abides in a luminous and clear state in which those are absent.

Question: Does that mean that if one were abiding in the luminous and clear state, one wouldn't look to see whether there was a pile of stones or a human being? One would just rest in not knowing?
Rinpoche: Yes, that's exactly what it means. One would rest without investigating or analyzing external phenomena, rather one would simply dwell in a peaceful state within meditation. Now if we were talking about the meditation of the secret mantra-Vajrayana, such meditative practices are not much concerned with these four concentrations. One doesn't not perceive in terms of such a series of meditations or such stages of meditation, rather one cultivates a factor of stability, and the introduction to the nature of the mind comes in terms of such a factor of stability. In the sutra tradition, however, there is a great deal of discussion about those four concentrations and the way in which one proceeds through them, by way of them, to realization of the final nature of things. However, here in this context, in terms of what one actually practices in Vajrayana practice, one does not proceed in that way; rather, a mere Shamatha is adequate, and the introduction to the nature of mind is made in terms of that mere factor of stability.



Chapter Seven
Mental Cultivation in the Transformation of Dharma into Dharmata

The discussion of how one's state is thoroughly transformed from dharma to dharmata is enumerated in ten different topics. This transformation is achieved through mental cultivation or we could say meditation. Up to this point we have discussed six of these topics and now we will begin with the seventh.

7. Mental Cultivation

45. The introduction to mental cultivation:
For individuals wishing to cross the threshold
Into original non-conceptual wisdom,
For any bodhisattva, Awakening Hero,
Here is how to cultivate the mind.

46. By virtue of one's ignorance of suchness
The "store of all seeds" of what is unreal, mere invention,

Is the cause for two which do not exist to appear;
And, with that as the base, there are grounds for
diversification,
Due to which the cause and effects as well,
In spite of appearing, still do not exist.
With that appearing, pure being does not appear;
Through that not appearing, pure being indeed appears.
Through such cultivation of mind, when properly done,
The Bodhisattva steps across the brink
Into original non-conceptual wisdom.

47. Through focusing thus, mere awareness is focused on,
Through which there **are** *no referents to focus on;*
Through there being no referents that could be focused on,
There is no such mere awareness to focus on;
Through that not existing on which to focus, the verge
Is crossed into focusing free of this twofold division;

48. No split into two existing on which to focus,
This is original non-conceptual wisdom,
Since this is what is defined with the utmost precision
As that which involves no object, no focusing,
No attributes on which to focus at all.

Mental cultivation deals with how something is changed, its condition before the transformation and the way in which the transformation takes place.

Those bodhisattvas who wish to meditate on non-conceptual wisdom need to understand that we wander in samsara because we do not understand how phenomena exist and we need to understand reality or dharmata to achieve liberation.

Ordinary persons who do not understand dharmata, i.e., the way in which all phenomena exist, become involved with that which is not true. This is how they enter into confusion and the reason why mistaken appearances arise for them.

Our mind has a nature of emptiness; nevertheless, it is at the same time very clear, extremely luminous and unceasing. Because of this luminous clarity, various thoughts arise and we therefore become involved in confusion. It's like a drawing or painting. Generally speaking, we do not mistake a painting for the object portrayed in the painting. However, if the painting is extremely good our eyes can be deceived and gradually, as we become more and more accustomed and involved with it, we take the painting to be real, to be what it actually portrays and appears to be. In the same way, the very vivid clarity of our own mind leads to our confusing appearances with something real and we become involved in confusion.

Our mind as empty is homogenous, without differentiation. However, mind as luminous clarity has differences, namely, the eight consciousnesses.[50] The foundation of these eight consciousnesses is the eighth, the alaya consciousness. In the words of the root text here, this is referred to as "the store of all seeds." This refers to the fact that the various predispositions or latencies have entered this alaya consciousness and later they return as various appearances. If these predispositions that have entered the alaya consciousness are good, then the appearances to the mind will, accordingly, be something good. If, on the other hand, these predispositions are of a negative nature, then the appearances to which they give rise are ugly and painful in nature. So, the root of all appearances is this alaya consciousness.

In dependence upon this alaya consciousness, confusion comes about when the six consciousnesses make contact with the six types of sensory expressions – sight, sound, smell, etc. This contact of the external object and the internal consciousnesses causes appearances to arise. Even though phenomena are empty, there are no external apprehended phenomena or internal apprehending consciousnesses, from the alaya consciousness all these appearances arise.

So, first there is no inherent existence; there is no existence by way of own nature. Then there is the alaya consciousness. From the alaya consciousness come the six types of knowers or consciousnesses and the various appearances that dawn in the face of those knowers. However, in regard to their nature, those appearances are not truly established and for that reason they are called "mistaken."

When these appearances are mistaken for being real, i.e., not empty which is their true nature, confusion of samsara arises. Through the dawning of those mistaken appearances and being confused, at that time the dharmata does not appear. However, if the true nature of these appearances is realized to be empty, i.e., as dharmata, it appears, these mistaken appearances are abandoned and the bodhisattva develops or enters into non-conceptual wisdom.

The discussion above of appearances in contrast to dharmata is given in the way it is presented in the sutras. On this path the emptiness of phenomena is realized through extensive analytical reasoning. In the Vajrayana, particularly in Mahamudra and Dzogchen meditation, we go about this differently, by using direct perception of mind. In the Vajrayana we do not emphasize external appearances, but rather look at internal mind. This method does not require extraordinary exertion of many eons or many lifetimes of practice; rather we look at dharmata as undifferentiated from our own mind. In this system external appearances are not negated, as they would be by another path.

In the meditation of the Vajrayana appearances are not negated. In this text, it says that when dharmata is seen, then the various appearances as external phenomena do not appear and are not seen and when those external appearances are seen, then dharmata is not seen. However, the procedure of the Vajrayana that we have just been discussing is different: through that procedure we see dharmata or mind itself, and as a result the appearances of other phenomena are not stopped. So, that is the difference between these two approaches.

Within dharmata, the alaya consciousness appears. Within this consciousness, there are various appearances. In just that way, all phenomena are observed as mind only; they are understood as merely the appearance of mind and we understand them to be empty. Similarly, we see that the internal mind is empty and we also understand that both the appearances and the mind perceiving these appearances are the same, both lack any nature of their own.

Seeing the lack of any difference between the external appearances and the internal mind is called "non-conceptual wisdom," because

there is no way to identify anything by saying, "It's such and such." There's no identification of anything as good or as bad.

This is why we say non-conceptual wisdom does not observe signs in any way. With non-conceptual wisdom all appearances are recognized as being just appearances of mind. In terms of that realization, we realize the emptiness.

This is how the emptiness of any inherent existence is presented as a principal point. However, it's not that only emptiness has been discussed, presented or demonstrated; rather, it is also shown that appearances are just mind. Because of how the Buddha taught, two different traditions or systems of explaining the nature of phenomena developed. The Buddha turned three wheels of dharma; the first was known as the Hinayana. In the second turning the Buddha emphasized emptiness, and in the final turning of the wheel of dharma, the Buddha emphasized that appearances are the luminous display of mind, which itself does not exist inherently. So, the presentation of two different ways of talking about the nature of things in this text is consistent with the different presentations that the Buddha made.

Determining that emptiness is the nature of phenomena by reasoning is an extremely good way to go about it, but it is a long path. To go about it in this way is extremely good, for one separates from all grasping and conceptuality. Still, if we want an introduction in terms of direct perception to this emptiness, there is no method for quickly and directly introducing us to it. However, we can look directly at the way in which the mind abides, and that is the method presented in the Mahamudra and Dzogchen traditions. In this way, appearances are realized to be mind and mind is realized as emptiness, making a relationship in that manner. Again, there is no method for being directly introduced to the emptiness of the nature of phenomenal appearances. There is, however, this way to bring about a relationship that is of great importance between meditative experience on the one hand and the view on the other; to be introduced directly and quickly to the emptiness that is the nature of the mind and that is something of great significance.

As it is, we have never really looked at our own mind. From beginningless time we have not looked to see what our mind really is.

We have just gone casually along, being confused about it, thinking, "Well, I have a mind. It does exist. It has this and that quality and it is something that is extremely potent." However, when we look and ask, "Where is my mind? What is my mind?" Then we don't see much of anything. If we look, there isn't a whole lot to be seen.

Similarly, if we look intensively at mind, we don't see anything. Why is it that we don't find anything? Is it because we don't know how to look? Is it because we don't know where to look? Is it because our mind is transparent like water so we can't see it? Or is it because our mind is too small to see? No, when we look, we simply don't find anything. The reason why we don't find anything is that our mind doesn't really exist. It is, in fact, just the nature of dharmata. This is discovered not through reasoning and analysis, but by just looking right at it.

As we talked about before, we examine external phenomena by looking for the hand, for instance, and ask, "Where is this hand? Is the thumb the hand? Are the fingers the hand?" We then think, "Yes, emptiness is probably the truth of the matter." But, we don't have to do that when we look at our mind. We just look for our mind, "Where is it?" In that way, we see emptiness directly.

Does that mean that it's just nothing whatsoever? If we don't find anything because mind doesn't really exist, does that mean that we are just a lifeless corpse? No, even though we don't find anything when we look for our mind, nevertheless we understand and know that there is what is called "luminous clarity." If we then look for that luminous clarity, we don't find anything. We discover that while the mind is luminous and clear, it is also empty, and while it is empty, it is luminous and clear.

So we experience through meditation these things that can be discovered through reasoning and analysis and arrive at the same thing. These topics that are explained in the treatises and the experience which we arrive at through the practice of Mahamudra meet at one point, come down to one thing.

CHAPTER EIGHT
The Bodhisattva Levels and the Five Paths

8. THE LEVELS THROUGH APPLICATION

49. The penetration of levels through application
Should be known to entail the following four steps:
Through intense application involving informed
commitment,
The stage where training is done through informed
commitment
Comprises the step of definitive verification.
To connect with superior, first-hand realization
Is the first of the levels, the stage the precise is encountered.

50. Through intense application employing meditation,
The impure levels followed by those which are pure
Are what comprise the stage of recollection.
Through application involving final perfection,
The spontaneous deeds of a Buddha continually flow;
Hence this is the stage of immersion into the core.

The eighth point of the transformation of dharma into dharmata is a discussion of the bodhisattva levels (Skt. *bhumi*, Tib. *sa*) and the five paths (Skt. *marga*, Tib. *lam*). The text presents four levels that we go through.

❁ The first stage encompasses the first two of the five paths and it is called here the level of longing (Tib. *möpa*). At this stage, which covers the first path of accumulation, we haven't realized emptiness directly yet, but we intellectually understand emptiness and have the aspiration to meditate on it. This leads to the second path of application in which we actually meditate on emptiness.

❁ The second stage is called the stage of definitive verification and this encompasses the third path of seeing. At this stage we actually arrive at direct realization of emptiness. This level is also the first bodhisattva level.

❁ The third stage is called the path of meditation, and at this stage we do indeed realize emptiness directly. Even though we see emptiness, we still have a great many predispositions or latencies to which we have become very accustomed. Because of the strength of these predispositions, after we see dharmata it is covered over and we become confused again. What can help? Meditation. The Tibetan word for meditation is *gom*, which is closely related to and has very much the sense of another Tibetan word *khom*, which means "to familiarize and to become accustomed to." Up to this point, what we have been accustomed to is confusion, so we have to become accustomed to non-confusion, so that through meditation we have to become accustomed to dharmata. The process of getting used to dharmata encompasses the fourth path of meditation. This also comprises the first six impure bodhisattva levels (the second to seventh). These six are called "impure levels" because they continue to have attributes of confusion, being mistaken (still clinging to labels or attributes) and having disturbing emotions.

Next come the three pure bodhisattva levels, at which confusion and disturbing emotions have been for the most part abandoned and we arrive very close to the level of a Buddha. These nine levels, ranging from the second to the tenth, are called "the occasion of subsequent

mindfulness." Over those nine bodhisattva levels our realization and familiarity with dharmata are increasing and, from that point of view, we are getting used to what we have already seen; it is called "the period of subsequent mindfulness."

Now we will speak about the fourth way that it is laid out in this presentation.

☸ The fourth stage is called "the stage of immersion into the core" and is the path of final perfection, which is the state of Buddhahood. Its nature is that we see the existence of all phenomena completely. Through seeing this, confusion and confused appearances are understood to lack inherent existence. Through understanding their lack of inherent existence, the negative emotions and ignorance are abandoned naturally. By abandoning the afflictions and ignorance, wisdom increases.

As was explained, we develop this non-conceptual wisdom further. Also, we know clearly, without mistaking the conventional appearances that are undifferentiable from dharmata. We possess the wisdom that knows the nature of phenomena and the wisdom that knows the variety of phenomena. With these two wisdoms, one knows the way in which things appear to all sentient beings. Through knowing both truths one realizes just what suffering and difficulties sentient beings have and how they get involved in such suffering. This creates an extraordinary tender love for all sentient beings.

Such tender love leads to a capacity to help sentient beings, using the two qualities of a Buddha's wisdom, and the strong wish to help others become free from suffering is a compassionate attitude, it is a compassion with the ability to help others. One has this ability because the basic problem sentient beings experience is simply that of being mistaken and having a confused view. Being in error can be corrected through having understood that it is suitable to cast off that difficult situation. If one doesn't know it, then one cannot do anything about it, but if one does, then it is indeed possible to extricate oneself. At a given time one might not be able to help a particular sentient being; nevertheless, gradually, over a period of time, one will be able to help all beings.

Because of the three aspects of a Buddha's wisdom – knowledge, compassion and capacity – the enlightened activity of a Buddha comes forth. This enlightened activity has two aspects: its continuum is never cut and it is spontaneous. When we say that it is spontaneous, we mean that it does not require any exertion on the part of the Buddha. The way in which a Buddha enters into such activity is that the difficult situation in which sentient beings find themselves is a situation that can indeed be overcome. If one does abandon it, then there is a great advantage to do that. If one does not, then great suffering follows. A Buddha understands the situation of sentient beings and from that point of view he leads sentient beings to the path to Buddhahood. In this way, a Buddha engages in enlightened activity both naturally and spontaneously.

The enlightened activity of a Buddha is not only natural and spontaneous, but it is also unceasing, that is to say, a Buddha is always involved in helping sentient beings and the number of sentient beings is inconceivable. The reason for the unceasing activity of a Buddha is that all sentient beings can eventually enter into the genuine path and achieve liberation. It's not the case that there are some sentient beings who have the good fortune to reach enlightenment and others who will never do so. If some sentient beings cannot achieve enlightenment, then a Buddha would help those who could and his work would be done. However, since everyone eventually encounters the fortunate situation in which they are able to progress along the path, a Buddha's activity never ends.

A Buddha has great compassion for all sentient beings without any exception. Some people think that since a Buddha feels compassion for sentient beings and sees their situation of suffering clearly, then a Buddha must feel pain on account of continually and very vividly seeing the suffering of sentient beings. It's not that way, however. Of course a Buddha does see all sentient beings and their suffering vividly. At the same time, a Buddha has the capacity to eventually protect all sentient beings from suffering. This way compassion is very joyful and one thinks, "Today I was able to help this person" and the next day, "I was able to help two people today" and one knows that as time goes on one will be able to protect all sentient beings from suffering and help

them reach enlightenment. From that point of view, we feel great joy, and therefore compassion does not have an aspect of suffering; rather it is very joyful.

Questions

Question: Would you talk about *nyams* in relationship to non-conceptual wisdom?
Rinpoche: The sorts of temporary experiences or *nyams* in Tibetan are not faults, they are good qualities in the sense that they come about through experience in meditation. However, if one becomes attached to such experiences, then they lead to bondage and in that way they become faults. There are three types of temporary experiences: a temporary experience of happiness, a temporary experience of clarity and a temporary experience of non-conceptuality. As for the first, happiness, there is happiness in body and happiness in mind. As for clarity, it means feeling that one's meditation is going extremely well, becoming very bright and clear. As for non-conceptuality, it is the sense that the stream of conceptuality has been severed or cut and that thoughts have just stopped. The problem is that one becomes attached to such experiences and if one becomes attached to them, then the force of one's meditation decreases. So from that point of view, it is important to abandon attachment to temporary experiences.

Question: What is the difference between illusion-like appearance for someone who has achieved the path of seeing or the path of meditation and has illusion-like appearance at the time of what is called post-meditation? What is the difference between such illusion-like appearance and merely thinking, without having achieved that level, merely thinking, "All of these things are just illusion?"
Rinpoche: Not all that much. It is just understanding something to be a certain way. From studying the text, we can understand that all phenomena are like illusions and that's not terribly different from what a superior person understands. However, there is the difference of whether it is based upon experience or not. For someone who does not have such experience, *nyam-nyongs* – i.e., to say that all phenomena

are like illusions – is merely from the point of view of knowledge or prajna, from the point of view of intelligence, a sharp knowledge of things. We could say, "All phenomena are emptiness" or "All phenomena are like illusions," but without such experience, it's just knowledge. However, when someone has realized emptiness in direct perception, has seen emptiness directly during meditation, then later in post-meditation, when various appearances arise again, that person takes them to be just like illusions and does so from the point of view of having actual experience. Now later, when one arrives at what are called "the pure grounds" (the eighth, ninth and tenth bodhisattva grounds), one experiences emptiness and dependent arising in union. However, one does not experience such a union of emptiness and dependent arising at these early stages, such as the path of seeing. At that time, at the path of seeing, what one has is a definite knowledge or certainty that arises from experience.

Question: Does one have a certainty or definite knowledge with regard to illusion-like appearances at the time of the subsequent achievement of the path of seeing – such a certainty that arises from experience?
Rinpoche: Yes, because the path of seeing is experience.

Question: In other texts they talk about achieving such levels as Guru Rinpoche, who could actually put his hand through pillars and so on. It's more than anything intellectual. The world is an illusion, I guess, if you can put your hand through rocks.
Rinpoche: Guru Rinpoche's putting his hand through a rock or pillar is a sign of appearance and mind having become mixed. For instance, at Gampopa's monastery there's a pillar that has a gap in it. This came about when a student asked Gampopa, "What does it mean when one says the mixing of mind and appearance?" And Gampopa said, "It's like this!" [Gampopa put his hand through a pillar splitting it into two sections creating a gap between the top and bottom section.] Ever since that time there has been a gap in that pillar. This is what happens as one proceeds beyond the path of seeing, and mind and appearance become actually mixed.

Question: Would you say something about the difference between non-established, not truly existent and non-existence?

Rinpoche: First of all, as for the word "non-existent," it is *medpa* in Tibetan. It can have two different meanings. Sometimes "non-existent" refers to emptiness; i.e., the final nature of all phenomena. Sometimes it just means that something isn't there. For instance, if you say, "I don't have any money," then that non-existence of money for oneself is not a case of the final nature of things. The term "not truly established" (*denpa matrub*) mainly refers to emptiness in that one is pointing to the falsity of other things, that other phenomena exist through the force of or in the manner of not being true; they are false. In this way one is pointing to emptiness. As for the term "not established" (*matrub*), it is pretty much the same as the term "not truly established." Tsongkapa, the founder of the Gelugpa tradition, said many times in his writings that one must add on this qualification "truly" when one speaks about the way in which things exist; one has to say "not truly existing or established" rather than just "not established." He said this many times, that this particular qualification was necessary. Many other scholars have said that it's okay not to affix that qualification "truly" and there has been a lot of debate about whether one has to say "not truly established" or whether it is okay just to say "not established." It's not all that important because they pretty much mean the same thing.



CHAPTER NINE
The Benefits of the Transformation Of Dharma into Dharmata

9. DISADVANTAGES OF NO TRANSFORMATION

51. The introduction to disadvantages
Includes the four which would follow as a result
Of there being no transformation; namely, the flaw
That preventing afflictions' entry would lack a support;
The flaw of the path's introduction lacking support;
The flaw of there being no basis of imputation
For speaking of individuals reaching nirvana;
As well as the flaw of no basis of imputation
For distinctions between three forms of enlightenment.

The ninth point of the transformation of dharma into dharmata is the disadvantages of there not being any transformation. This refers to the fact that various unfavorable situations do not come about after one has transformed one's state, place or condition. There are four points here.

☸ The first point is that disturbing emotions do not return after they have been abandoned. If disturbing emotions were to return, as they are very harmful, this would be a fault or disadvantage. However, for the bodhisattvas who have realized dharmata and developed non-conceptual wisdom, the disturbing emotions do not return. They don't return because the disturbing emotions are themselves a state of falseness and confusion. Once that has been understood, then they just fall away and don't come back.

☸ The second unfavorable situation that does not come about is the exhaustion or wearing out of the effectiveness of the antidotes to the disturbing emotions. However, there is no extinguishing of the potency of the path. The reason is that the disturbing emotions are themselves mistaken and the wisdom, having become manifest, is genuine, not confused. Since it is true, it is never used up or finished.

☸ The third point is that there is no returning to former states. This non-returning to one's former state and having fears and doubts, thinking that one might fall back, was discussed by the great Indian master Dharmakirti. He illustrated it in terms of two examples. If we start with a pot of water, heat it and bring it to boil, eventually the water becomes cold again. Similarly, if we apply fire to gold, it melts. But once we take the heat away, the gold returns to a solid state. We might think that no matter how much we purify our condition, eventually we would just fall back into the condition we had been in before. But the situation is not like that of heated water and gold because the nature of gold is a solid and the nature of water is cold and a liquid. So these two substances simply return to their original nature; however, that's not the same with the disturbing emotions, confusion and samsara. The disturbing emotions, confusion, and samsara are adventitious stains and mistaken views which are not part of the original nature of dharmata. Therefore, once one understands the mistake and realizes the true nature, the dharmata, one does not fall back into the previous condition.

☸ The fourth point is the unfavorable condition of regression from knowing everything, a Buddha's omniscience. We might think, "Well, it's not possible to know everything." And we might compare that with someone who is training in jumping, who can indeed learn

to jump further and further. However, eventually, the jumper will reach the limit of how far he can jump. We might think, "Well, it's like that. I can develop a great deal of knowledge and good qualities and so forth, but I cannot learn everything."

However, the situation is actually of a different nature and indeed such omniscience does exist. There are two reasons why omniscience does arise. The first reason is that "jumping" is something that is done with the body and the body is composed of particles; for that reason there is a limit to what it can do. Mind is of a different nature; it is of the nature of luminous clarity and there is no limit to its ability to know. When one realizes the dharmata, then one naturally knows all conventional phenomena that appear within dharmata.

The second reason it is possible to achieve omniscience is that it is appropriate that we would pass beyond the confusion and hardship of cyclic existence; we can achieve release of nirvana. In Tibetan nirvana is "that which is passed beyond suffering." Since it is appropriate to pass beyond samsara and to achieve nirvana, omniscience is possible.

10. The Benefits of Transformation

52. The introduction to the benefits
Should be known to include these four, but in the reverse.

The tenth and last topic of the transformation of dharma into dharmata is the advantages of having transformed one's state into that of wisdom. This relates to the previous ninth topic about the four points: the disadvantages in regard to the possibility of abandoning disturbing emotions without them returning, achieving an antidote that does not become exhausted, and the two aspects of the possibility of achieving omniscience. There's another side to it, namely, that we can indeed abandon the disturbing emotions. The antidote is not of the nature that suffers from exhaustion, and we can achieve nirvana and become a Buddha.

To summarize, the benefits of this transformation are:

- The absence of the disturbing emotions,
- the presence of the antidotes,
- the absence of returning to former states,
- the absence of not knowing everything.

Chapter Ten
The Conclusion

V. The Conclusion

A. The Compatibility of Dharma and Dharmata

53. To show how phenomena not existing appear,
They are likened to dream and compared to illusion and so on;
To illustrate the total transformation,
To space it is likened, to gold and water and so on.

We have arrived at the conclusion of the discussion of dharma and dharmata. The way in which these two are compatible with one another is set forth in this last chapter. This is explained in terms of three examples.

☸ The first example explains how phenomena (dharma) do not ultimately exist, and that such appearances, although empty, still appear to us. This is described in the example of a dream, an illusion or a mirage. Dreams, illusions and mirages don't actually exist and yet they

appear just because they do not exist, while not existing; right at that time, indeed, they appear. Similarly, the phenomena of cyclic existence do not exist; nevertheless, within not existing, they appear.

❁ The second example illustrates the transformation of one's ordinary knowledge into a state of non-conceptual wisdom. What example is suitable to show the ultimate? Indeed, in the beginning there are faults, defects, but one can separate from those, one can part ways. A comparison would be like clouds in the sky. Sometimes there are clouds in the sky, but that is not the nature of the sky. It is quite suitable for these clouds to just pass away and for the sky and clouds to part ways because the nature of the sky is to be really free of clouds. Similarly, gold might become tarnished, but tarnish is not the nature of gold; it is suitable for gold to be restored to its pure state.

❁ The third example illustrates how one can have the nature of dharmata, yet it not be apparent as an ordinary being. Water can become quite dirty, but the dirt is not the nature of water, because dirt and water have different natures and water can be restored to its purity.

Because the two have different natures, the purity of the water can be restored such as by letting the water just sit.

So, like those three examples, temporarily dharmata is concealed, blocked by phenomena of samsara, but that is not the nature of the situation and dharmata does not need to remain covered over by the phenomena of samsara; rather, it is appropriate for the situation to become pure.

This is the end of the ten topics.

B. The Author of the Text

54. The verses distinguishing phenomena and pure being composed by the guardian Maitreya are herewith concluded.

55. The Kashmiri Khenpo Mahadzana and the Tibetan translator Lotsawa Gelong Senge Gyaltsen collaborated in

> *translating this [from Sanskrit into Tibetan] and in correcting their work, thus providing this finalized version.*

Generally speaking, at the great monastic universities of Nalanda and Vikramashila in India, from which the teachings of the Buddha-dharma came and were spread widely, various sorts of treatises were composed. Among the different people who studied at these monastic universities, there were some who were able to compose treatises and some who were not. Some were the best, some were fair and some were poor. What are the characteristics of those three groups? The best ones to compose treatises are those who see dharmata directly, those who have profound realization. The middle group are those who practiced the Manjushri practice and were able to meet with Manjushri. The lowest group are those who are skilled in five topics of knowledge and could compose treatises, but they are the lowest of the three.

This particular treatise that we have been studying is particularly distinguished because it was composed by someone who saw dharmata directly and dwells on the tenth bodhisattva level. This makes this treatise of the highest kind.

So, I wanted to explain to you why I chose this particular treatise to teach. What is explained in this text is the way in which one arrives at an inferential realization of just what dharmata (the nature of all phenomena) is. At the same time, there is a very powerful relationship between what is taught here and the practice of meditation of students – namely, dharmata. This dharmata discussed in this text is the same as the mind's way of abiding, the mind's nature, and therefore it is related to the practice of meditation, in that what we meditate upon is just this mind's nature. Through such meditation, we arrive at the final result and for that reason meditation is extremely important. That's why I have chosen this text.

In earlier times it was said by various accomplished persons that to realize these great commentaries we must receive the oral instructions. That's the important point: what one has learned and what has been taught in this book can indeed direct one's practice. So, please practice in that way.

The Six Realms of Samsara

Name	As pictured in thangkas	Obstacle
	HIGHER REALMS	
God (Skt. *deva*)	The celestial paradises are shown	Pride
Demi-god (Skt. *asura*)	Demi-gods are involved in conflict with the gods.	Jealousy
	REALM EASIEST TO ATTAIN ENLIGHTENMENT	
Human realm	Human beings in their houses practicing the dharma	The five disturbing emotions
	LOWER REALMS	
Animal realm	Animals on earth	Ignorance
Hungry ghost (Skt. *preta*)	Beings with large bellies and very small mouths and necks	Desire
Hell beings	Beings being tortured in hot and cold realms	Anger

THE FIVE PATHS

1. Path of Accumulation	**Practice** four mindfulnesses, recognize the four marks of existence (impermance, absence of a self, suffering and peace). **Practice** four renunciations **Practice** four concentrative absorptions (strong interest, perseverance, attentiveness and investigation)
2. Path of Application	**Practice** five controlling powers (confidence, sustained effort, mindfulness, samadhi and prajna). These powers become "unshakable" at the end of this path.
3. Path of Insight/seeing	**Attain** the first bodhisattva level of perceiving emptiness. **Develop** true awareness of the Four Noble Truths and their 16 aspects. **Develop** seven factors of enlightenment (memory, investigation of meaning and values, effort, joy, refinement and serenity, samadhi and equanimity).
4. Path of Cultivation (Meditation)	**One** goes through the second to tenth bodhisattva levels. **One** practices the eight-fold Noble Path (right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right meditation).
5. Path of Fulfillment	**This** is Buddhahood.

THE BODHISATTVA LEVELS

1. The Joyous One (rab tu dga' ba) (rab tu dga' ba)	Emphasis on generosity (sbyin pa)
2. The Stainless One (dri ma med pa)	Emphasis on discipline (tsultrim)
3. The Illuminating One ('od byed pa)	Emphasis on patience (bzod pa)
4. The Flaming One ('od 'phro ba)	Emphasis on exertion (bzod pa)
5. The One Difficult to Conquer (shin tu sbyang dka' ba)	Emphasis on meditation samadhi
6. The Manifest One (mngon du gyur ba)	Emphasis on wisdom (sherab)
7. The Far Going one (ring du song pa)	Emphasis on skilful activity (thabs la mkhas pa).
8. The Unshakable One (mi gyo ba)	Emphasis on future projection (smob lam)
9. The One of Good Discrimination (legs pa'i blo gros)	Emphasis on efficacy (stobs)
10. Cloud of Dharma (chos kyi sprin)	Attaining enlightened wisdom (yeshe)

Transformation of Conciousness into Wisdom

Organ	Consciousness	Wisdom	Kayas
Eye	1.Eye consciousness		
Ear	2. Ear consciousness		
Nose	3. Nose consciousness	All-accomplishing wisdom	Nirmanakaya
Tongue	4. Tongue consciousness		
Body	5. Body consciousnes		
	6A. Non-conceptual mind consciousness		
	6B. Conceptual mind consciousness	Dharmadhatu wisdom	Svabhavikakaya
Mind	7A. Immediate mind consciousness	Discriminating wisdom	Sambhogakaya
	7B. Afflicted mind consciousness	Wisdom of equanimity	
	8. Alaya consciousness	Mirror-like wisdom	Dharmakaya

Notes

1. The two Ornaments are: *The Ornament of Clear Realization* (*Abhisamayalankara*), a text on the Prajnaparamita, and *The Ornament of the Mahayana Sutras* (*Mahayanasutralankara*). The two distinctions are: *Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes* (*Madhyantavibhaga*), a text on the Middle-way school, and (this text), *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata* (*Dharmadharmatavibhaga*), a text discussing the Buddha-essence. *The Uttaratantra* is *The Changeless Nature,* a treatise on Buddha-Essence.

2. The Buddha's teachings occurred in three important phases, known as the three *dharmachakras* or three turnings of the wheel of dharma. The first turning includes the teachings common to all traditions, those of the Four Noble Truths, the Eight-fold Path, selflessness and impermanence, which can lead to liberation from suffering. The second turning expanded on the first, the fruition of its teachings on the emptiness of all phenomena (the Prajnaparamita teachings) and universal compassion is Buddhahood. The teachings of the third turning are those on the Buddha potential and its inherent qualities. For a detailed account of the three wheels of dharma see Thrangu Rinpoche's *The Three Vehicles of Buddhist Practice* published by Namo Buddha Publications.

3. See chapter one of Gampopa's *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* for the five families or types of potential for enlightenment.

4. The three natures or three aspects of experience are: the imaginary nature (Skt. *parikalita,* Tib. *kun rtag*), the dependent nature (Skt. *paratantra,* Tib. *gzhan dbang*) and the truly existent nature (Skt. *parinispanna,* Tib. *yongs grub*). These are explained differently in the Cittamatra and Shentong schools.

5. The five prevailing themes are: name, ground, concept, original wisdom and suchness.

6. "The Mother" is a collective term applied to the teachings contained in the Prajnaparamita.

There are seventeen principal works on the Prajnaparamita called "the six mothers and eleven sons or daughters." The distinction between works being defined as mothers or daughters is whether they have all eight aspects or topics of the Prajnaparamita or not. The eight topics are clearly distinguished by Maitreya in *The Ornament of Clear Realization*.

7. According to the Cittamatra or Mind-only system, all phenomena pertain either to the inner perceiving aspect of consciousness or to the outer perceived aspect of consciousness; in other words they are all mind. The division of each moment of awareness into an inner perceiving mind and an outer perceived object is a conceptual invention. So the whole of existence is empty of a duality of substance between mind and matter. Consciousness that is self-aware, empty of the duality of perceiver and perceived, is genuine, is actually there according to the Cittamatra school. – *Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche*

8. The Yogacarya-Madhyamaka here corresponds to the Shentong school.

9. The headings in italics have been added to help the reader while the headings in small caps correspond to the verses and outline of the text.

10. In our present day, for example, Trungpa Rinpoche received a shambhala text from Padmasambhava who lived over a 1,000 years ago and Dudjom Rinpoche also received many ancient transmissions from Padmasambhava. The receiving of this knowledge is known as terma in Tibetan and a person who has the exceptional qualities and training to receive such a text is a terton.

11. Thrangu Rinpoche has always emphasized that all three traditions of Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana were practiced in Tibet and that the Hinayana which literally means "lesser vehicle" is in no way inferior to the Mahayana.

"Also we should not think of Theravada as necessarily Hinayana. We have to understand Hinayana in context, it basically refers to a person, an individual who wants to seek enlightenment for him or herself alone. Just because one is a Theravadan does not mean they want to do that. The Theravadan individual may want to do it for others. In Theravada teachings they practice the four Bramahaviharas, the four infinities of love, compassion, joy and equanimity. So it is not true to say that Theravada teachings do not emphasize compassion, love and compassion, they do." – *Traleg Rinpoche*

12. The Vajrayana teachings are often called this and Thrangu Rinpoche has said that they are basically the same. He has said that the word often translated as "secret" should be translated as "essential" so it would be the essential mantra Vajrayana.

13. Buddhists make a distinction between how the world appears to us and how it truly is. One modern example is that we may see a table and experience it as solid, as brown, and made of wood. That is how it appears (we could say the dharma of the table). However, a physicist will tell us that the table actually is a collection of millions of carbon atoms which are moving at tremendous speeds and there are tremendous distances between these atoms so the "table" is actually over 99.99% space. The color we see is just radiation given off at a certain wavelength. This is closer to what the table actually is (we could say the dharmata of the table). Experienced meditators (such as Milarepa) could demonstrate the emptiness of the table by simply putting their hand through it.

So conventionally or on the relative level, when we hit our hand against a wall, it will get badly bruised and hurt. However, on the ultimate level, the essence of the hand and the essence of the wall are empty.

14. Dharma has many meaning;, however it mainly refers to two things: "Dharma" as the Buddha's teachings and "dharma" meaning phenomena or mental objects.

15. As mentioned with the example of the table and atoms, Buddhist make a distinction between how the world appears to us and how it truly is. So dharma is phenomena as we perceive it on the relative or conventional level and dharmata is phenomena as it truly isi.e. empty.

16. Of the three general classifications of suffering, two relate to impermanence. First, the suffering of change or impermanence is that all joyful experiences inevitably expire and turn into the suffering of change or loss. Second, and more subtle, is the constant threat of change running through conditioned life. This is what is described as the innate suffering of the process of existence.

17. Ultimate happiness itself is free of such notions as eliminating or attaining something. Enlightened mind is beyond the desire to get rid of suffering and to attain happiness. We need to understand that ultimate happiness is in itself liberation from such divided thoughts. Ultimate happiness is an experience

beyond any conditions. Nirvana can't be divided. When the experience of nirvana becomes alive though, it does so according to three classifications. The first is nirvana known as *gog-pai-mydn-das-pa*, "nirvana of cessation." The second nirvana is called *ma-gnds-pai-mydn-das-pa*, "non-abiding nirvana," which is beyond any level or stage that can be distinguished. The third nirvana is known as *rang-shin-kyi-mydn- das-pa*, "unconditioned" or "natural nirvana." – *Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche*

See the August 2004 issue of *Thar Lam* by Zhyisil Chokyi Ghatsal for a detailed teaching on the different nirvanas by Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche.

18. What is important to understand here is that it is not the objects of our experiences themselves which are abandoned, transformed or changed. In fact, both from the sutra and tantra approach, there is nothing wrong with the objects of our experiences – they are neither pure nor impure, but are only what they are. The impurity in our experiences does not come from the objects of our experiences but from the way in which we perceive them; because of the presence of clinging to a self and to duality, we perceive the world in a certain way – we perceive the objects of experience to be independent, to be permanent, to be substantial. So, when we talk about impure appearances, we are really referring to the lack of accuracy in our perception of the world. It is this lack of clarity, this lack of accuracy, which we seek to eliminate. – *Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche*

19. Theis can be explained by way of the Mind-only school which posits the existence of eight consciousnesses; eye sense-consciousness, ear sense consciousness, nose sense-consciousness, tongue sense-consciousness, body sense-consciousness, mental consciousness, afflicted or ego-consciousness and the all-basis or alaya consciousness. So what happens is that all of the habitual tendencies or habits or ways of perceiving are stored in the alaya consciousness, the *alaya vijnana;* then when certain conditions come together, we get the projections of all of these appearances that are the result of our having stored our previous habits in this alaya consciousness. We think that these projections from our own consciousness are real, when in fact they're not, they're just confused appearances. The alaya consciousness is called by two different names to illustrate the two functions that it performs. The first name is the holding consciousness because it holds all of the habitual tendencies, the imprints from our previous ways of perceiving. The second name is the conditioned consciousness because when certain conditions come together, then certain habits wake up and emit certain projections of appearances. In this way, you

can think of the alaya consciousness as being like a tape recorder. When it's on record, then it's storing all of the information, all of the sounds etc., then when you put it on play, it sends them out. So sometimes that example is used and you can evaluate it and see if you think it's a good example or not. In terms of the way that confusion arises, it is explained that the afflicted consciousness is like wind and the alaya consciousness is like the ocean. So the wind of the afflicted consciousness blows on this ocean of the alaya consciousness and causes these waves to come up out of it and those waves are the dualistic appearances that we think to be real. – *Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche*

20. The Vaibhashika and Sautrantika schools are Hinayana and the Mind-only and Madhyamaka schools are Mahayana. The Madhyamaka or Middle-way school is divided into two major schools by the Tibetans: the Rangtong school which follows the teachings of Nagarjuna fairly closely and maintains that everything is completely empty and the Shentong school which maintains that this emptiness is indivisible from luminosity/clarity (Tib. *salwa*) and that all sentient beings possess Buddha-essence.

21. The continuum of consciousness can be broken down into its individual moments of the past, present and the future. For example, a thought can be broken into the part of it that is the past, the part of it that is the present and the part that has not yet arisen.

22. The Lankavatara sutra says:

External reality appears as such to human beings
From whose minds originate diverse dualities
Due to an interaction between their discriminating thoughts and psychic imprints.
External reality is the product of the mind:
All appearances are, therefore, completely unreal,
For they are all the manifestation of the mind.

23. This reasoning is presented in several of Rinpoche's books and goes somewhat like this. If we take a hand, we see that it is not a solid hand, but is made up of fingers, flesh, bones, etc. The only reason we say it is "a hand" is our mind imputes that it is a hand. If we take a finger, it also is a categorization and label because the finger is really made up of a fingernail, skin, joints, etc. When we keep breaking this down smaller and smaller, there is always a smaller

particle. Say we reach the smallest indivisible particle, often called an atom, that atom can be broken down because it has a north side, an east side, a west side, etc. In other words, it can always be broken down into smaller units.

24. Carrying this argument on, we may say, for example, "Well, I can go outside and touch the stupa, paint it and so on and everyone else will see the same appearance that I see." The answer to this is that yes we do see the same thing but it is more like a hundred people standing on the shore in a dark night looking at the moon reflected in the water. Now every single person sees the moon reflected in the water, but clearly the moon is not actually in the water. Everyone sees this illusion in the water because of the dependent conditions (Tib. *tendrel*): the person having eyes, the night being dark, the water being still, and the moon being present.

25. In terms of the Mahayana philosophical schools, everybody agrees on the conduct in terms of how it is described; you cultivate loving-kindness and compassion and you act for the benefit of others. So there is no disagreement there. But in terms of the philosophical view, then there is disagreement and so it breaks down into the Mind-only school and the Middle way school. – *Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche*

26. Lacking inherent nature, by nature we mean in an example: take water, it appears as solid (ice) sometimes, it appears as fluid (water) and as a hot gas (steam) other times. These are the three appearances of the water molecule. But its inherent or true nature is more like one atom of oxygen connected to atoms of hydrogen. Similarly, the greatest Madhyamaka scholar will say that houses, people, trees and internal feelings such as anger and happiness do appear, so they are obviously not non-existent. But when examined closely their true nature is empty in that they are not solid and real but projections of mind. Two people can go to a movie and one will see a beautiful, uplifting movie, while the other will see a terrible piece of trash. The actual movie or its true nature is neither, but simply a series of thousands of single frames on celluloid film, which the mind creates into a movie.

27. We choose to translate *klesha* as "disturbing emotions" rather than "afflictions" because although the Sanskrit word has the meaning of some permanent stain like an affliction, the Tibetan word *nyon mong* has more the meaning of something that disturbs the peace of the mind, these being mainly attachment or desire, anger or aggression, bewilderment or ignorance, jealousy, and pride.

28. They motivate us to act in various ways, which is what karma, the truth that every action brings about an effect, really means. The effect of all actions establishes certain propensities or tendencies within us. This process is what karma in truth means. And the result is suffering.

29. What happens is that upon the basis of the belief in the existence of an inherently existent self there is the imputation of everything other than that self as inherently other. Consequently, attachment arises towards the self and that which is identified with the self and aversion towards that which is other than the self or that which threatens the self. This leads to hope and anxiety. Attachment and aversion together with the ignorance that accompanies these are the three root mental afflictions or disturbing emotions. From these arise jealousy, pride and so forth, all the various and innumerable other mental afflictions. On the basis of these mental afflictions, the actions performed are afflicted and as a result the imprints of afflicted actions are left in the mind or what is called "the alaya consciousness." The habit or imprint left by actions produces uninterrupted experiences of samsara, like the cups in the wheels of a watermill. This is what is meant by the term "karma"; karma is the maturation of experiences on the basis of the imprints of former actions. Since the root of all of these steps is the false imputation of an inherently existing self, it is the erroneous imputation that must be eradicated or cut through. – *Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche*

30. When hearing of the need to eliminate the belief in a self, many people think this refers to a belief in something that actually exists, like attachment to something really there. In fact, it's not. It is the habit of misconceiving that which is not a self to be a self. It is the habit of believing in something that is in fact not there. Ultimately, from that point of view, there is nothing really to abandon in the sense of a thing that can be thrown away. In the realization of egolessness or selflessness, there is nothing that actually has to be thrown away, rather it is the recognition of what has always been the case. Although people accept the view of the non-existence of a self, it is not the same as having actually realized selflessness. Selflessness can only be realized through practice. And realization consists of the eradication of the habit, not just the belief, of viewing things as a self. – *Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche*

31. The first recognition of the nature of mind, which is brought about in the student's experience through the intervention of the lama – whether during a teaching, a ritual ceremony, or guided meditation – becomes the basis for the

student's subsequent practice of dharma, the purpose of which is to enable the student to become accustomed and habituated to experiencing the world in the manner first pointed out. When, through the practice of the path, the student's experience reaches the ineffable fruition of Buddhahood, he or she is said to have fully realized the nature of mind. – *Lama Tashi Namgyal*

32. The person being born while in the bardo must choose this particular egg and sperm coming together for it to develop into a human.

33. Whatever we perceive is devoid of inherent existence. We perceive according to our mental outlook, which depends upon our habits or karmic patterns; our perception is dependent upon the habitual mind that sees, hears, tastes, etc. "Common" doesn't mean we all did the same thing; we do similar things. Beings in different psychological states of existence experience things differently. Beings in the same realm perceive with a similar outlook but individual experience varies. So the same happiness and pain aren't shared by all identically, only mutually. We experience similarly due to mutual conceptual patterns and create further individual patterns. – *Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche*

34. These are all cases that are called "common" from the perspective of there being a specific common result produced through the combination of the primary cause deriving from the phenomena of one mindstream and the intermediate condition deriving from those of another. – Jim Scott, translated from Mipham Rinpoche's commentary *Maitreya's Distinguishing Phenomena and Pure Being*.

35. The reasoning goes as such: the sensory consciousnesses receive sensory information or what are called sensory objects (*which also arise from the alaya, see note 19*) – say a white cup. How do we know it is a cup? We have to connect this visual object with some previous experience with the object so we know it holds tea, is fragile, is white, made of china, etc. This connection requires memory or a storehouse of information and that is what is stored in the alaya consciousness.

36. Along with the eight consciousnesses there is something else that is often mentioned. This is called the "immediate mind." The immediate mind is not a separate consciousness. It is the function of the impure mind that links the operations of one consciousness to another. It is that impulse or force of habit that causes the six consciousnesses to arise from the ground of the all basis and

the afflicted consciousness. It is that which causes the mental consciousness to arise on the basis of a sense perception and so on. It is an identifiable function of the impure mind, but is not in itself a separate consciousness therefore there are only eight types of impure consciousness. It is not considered to be a ninth.

In regard to the immediate mind, many texts present it as that which is generated by the cessation of a previous instant of consciousness and which links one type of consciousness to another. In the particular presentation by the third Gyalwa Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje's, "Profound Inner Meaning," the immediate mind is presented as that which causes the lack of recognition of dharmata or lack of recognition of the nature of things, in which case it would be considered an aspect of the seventh consciousness. The seventh consciousness in that way has an inward-directed aspect to it, which is the aspect of the seventh consciousness that causes the other consciousnesses to arise and function; that is the immediate mind. – *Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche*

37. This refers to clairvoyance where certain individuals can perceive what is happening in another individual's consciousnesses.

38. There are two distinct aspects involved in awareness of another's mind: the objective one in which the observer focusing attention on the mind of another produces an image of it; and the subjective one consisting of the experience accompanying consciousness of another's mind, an experience which is the specific content of the observer's mind alone. These two processes are comparable to the yogi's consciousness of the happiness or suffering of an ordinary person's mind through focusing on that, without his experience in that connection being the same as that of the other person. – Jim Scott, translated from Mipham Rinpoche's commentary *Maitreya's Distinguishing Phenomena and Pure Being.*

39. In India while the Madhyamaka school was prominent in Northern India, the Indians did not make a formal distinction between the Rangtong or Shentong view. However, centuries later the Tibetans did make a distinction. The Rangtong position was supported by great scholars such as Tsonkhapa who went on to found the Gelug school. They maintained that everything was empty and to suggest that there was a permanent quality such as Buddha-essence negates the teachings on the emptiness of all phenomena. Then there were equally great scholars such as the third Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, who maintained that there was an inherent, permanent, stainless quality called "Buddha-essence" in all sentient beings.

40. Dharmadhatu is essentially the same as dharmakaya; they are two indivisible aspects of the same thing. The dharmakaya emphasizes the wisdom aspect while dharmadhatu emphasizes the emptiness aspect.

41. Khenpo Tsultrim explains this passage as follows. The texts related to the Shentong view distinguish between two types of suchness or nirvana: naturally pure nirvana and nirvana which has been purified of superficial stains. The former refers to the ultimate nature, i.e., the Buddha-essence, which is present from the very beginning and during all three phases of development, namely, during the base, path and fruition stages (or ordinary being, bodhisattva and Buddha stages), and whose essence is free of any stain or imperfection whatsoever. The latter refers to nirvana, seen from the perspective of its being the fruition of the path.

It is evident that this distinction is a matter of pure convention, since the nirvana achieved through the path is none other that the actualization of "that untouched by stain:" i.e., that nature which has been present from the very outset. Thus, the essence of transformation consists, not in a change in the basic nature, but in a definitive elimination of everything that is "other" than, or not inherent to, that nature. – Jim Scott, translated from Mipham Rinpoche's commentary *Maitreya's Distinguishing Phenomena and Pure Being*.

42. One can think of it this way: the dharmakaya is the way things really are, and since the Buddha achieved complete understanding of this state, the dharmakaya is the body of the Buddha. Only the minds of very pure beings such as other Buddhas can perceive the dharmakaya, so there is the sambhogakaya with pure realms such as Tushita where pure bodhisattvas can visit and receive teachings. In fact, this is where Asanga went after twelve years of meditating to receive this text from the Maitreya Buddha. Finally, there is the nirmanakaya which is our ordinary reality and the Buddha manifested as an ordinary human being as the Shakyamuni Buddha. This last realm can be experienced by impure beings such as ourselves.

43. In the context where the transformation has not been undergone, anything possessing form and any sound characterized as speech qualify as appearances shared in common, whereas mind is not experienced in common. When the transformation has been undergone, however, all phenomena are nothing other than manifestations of the suchness and there is no impurity involved. For that reason, they are appearances demonstrating the specific feature of being exclusively pure self-manifestation (meaning non-dualistic experience as opposed to dualistic perception).

Nevertheless, in the eyes of those who have not undergone transformation, the one who has achieved that transformation will be experienced in a fashion involving differentiation, where he is seen as being a teacher distinct from his teaching and so on. – Jim Scott, translated from Mipham Rinpoche's commentary *Maitreya's Distinguishing Phenomena and Pure Being*.

44. As the word is used here and translated as observation, it refers to the absence of the actual process of a sensory consciousness perceiving its object. Normally, sensory consciousness is taught as being non-conceptual, but in this context its activity is conceptual in the sense that it involves the duality inherent in the subtle act of measurement constituting the process of perception. In other words, to perceive an object, the sensory consciousness must distinguish that object from everything that is not that object, and this is a subtly conceptual operation. – Jim Scott, from Mipham Rinpoche's commentary *Maitreya's Distinguishing Phenomena and Pure Being*.

45. For example, in *The Mosaic of the Rare and Supreme Ones, Requested by Kashyapa*, the Buddha said:

Kashyapa, "permanence" is one extreme, "impermanence" another. The middle between these two extremes is where there is no analysis, no description, no support, no appearance, no principles of awareness, and no place. Kashyapa, this is the middle path and is called "intimate and detailed discernment of phenomena correctly applied." – Jim Scott, translated from Mipham Rinpoche's commentary *Maitreya's Distinguishing Phenomena and Pure Being*.

46. The point here is that there is no experience of the center of space, because, as the Buddha taught, space has no outer boundaries and therefore, no center.

47. The ultimate achievement of union, in which there is no differentiation between a meditative and post-meditative state, occurs at the level of Buddhahood. An approximation of this occurs on the levels achieved by noble beings, and there is a partial resemblance to it in a mindstream where the symbolic wisdom of the mantric path has manifested due to profound skilful means. – Jim Scott, translated from Mipham Rinpoche's commentary *Maitreya's Distinguishing Phenomena and Pure Being*.

48. This verse explains an important point, that there is no contradiction between the ultimate way in which a Buddha sees – via the two aspects of

original wisdom, (1) simplicity and (2) complexity or variety, – and the meditative equipoise of the path of meditation, whether this is accompanied by the process of appearances or not. – Jim Scott, translated from Mipham Rinpoche's commentary *Maitreya's Distinguishing Phenomena and Pure Being*.

49. This refers to a bodhisattva who has developed non-conceptual wisdom: the result of endeavors undertaken by a practitioner in following the path and being victorious over afflicting factors.

50. It may be helpful here to understand the term for "consciousness," which in Sanskrit is "*vijnana*," which is a specific type of cognition. It is the term for "cognition," "*jnana*," with the prefix "*vi*," which means complete or fully developed. This is a more specific term than cognition and, although it may sound like a positive thing to say "fully-developed cognition," in this context it is actually somewhat pejorative because it refers to cognition that has become developed in the sense of becoming coarsened. This is the type of cognition, or consciousness, that we as ordinary individuals have and is what is divided into the eight or six types of consciousnesses. All of these consciousnesses are considered manifestations of the mind's impurity. They are things that arise when a mind does not recognize its own nature. The basic idea of the development of consciousness is that when a mind does not recognize its own nature – its inherent lucidity – which is just a mere cognition, it runs wild. And running wild it becomes coarse or develops into deluded cognition or consciousness, which is characteristic of samsara. Nevertheless, in the midst of all this confusion, the nature of these consciousnesses, the nature of this deluded mind, is unchanged. This unchanging nature of the mind is called "the pure alaya" as opposed to the "alaya consciousness," one of the eight consciousnesses. That pure alaya is mere cognition, fundamental jnana itself. Also, if you wish to make a distinction between the mind in its impure manifestations and the nature of the mind, mind itself, then mind (impure) will be called "*sem*," and the mind itself, that mere cognition itself, will be called "*sem nyi*," mind in itself.

Glossary of Terms

84,000 teachings. (Tib. *cho kyi phung po gyad khri bzhi stong*) 21,000 teachings on each of the Vinaya, Sutra, Abhidharma, and their combination. Their purpose is to eliminate the 84,000 different types of disturbing emotions latent in one's mind.

Abhidharma. (Tib. *chö ngön pa*) The Buddhist teachings are often divided into the Tripitaka: the sutras (teachings of the Buddha), the Vinaya (teachings on conduct,) and the Abhidharma, which are the analyses of phenomena that exist primarily as a tradition of commentary on the Buddhist teachings.

Abhidharmakosha. (Tib. *ngön pa dzod*) An authoritative scripture on Buddhist metaphysics according to the Hinayana tradition.

Abhisheka. (Tib. *wang*) Empowerment. The conferring of power or authorization to practice the Vajrayana teachings, the indispensable entrance door to tantric practice. One should also receive the practice instruction (Tib. *tri*) and the textual reading (Tib. *lung*).

Afflicted consciousness. (Tib. *nyön yid*) The seventh consciousness. As used here it has two aspects: the immediate consciousness which monitors the other consciousnesses, making them continuous, and the klesha consciousness which is the continuous presence of self. (See *consciousnesses, eight*)

Alaya consciousness. (Tib. *kün shi nam she*) According to the Cittamatra school this is the eighth consciousness and is often called the ground consciousness or storehouse consciousness.

Asanga. (Tib. *thok may)* A fourth-century Indian philosopher who founded the Cittamatra or Yogacarya school and wrote the five works of Maitreya which are important Mahayana works. Also brother of Vasubandhu.

Atisha. (982-1055 C.E.) A Buddhist scholar at the Nalanda University in India who came to Tibet at the invitation of the King to overcome the damage done by Langdarma. He helped found the Kadampa tradition.

Ayatanas. The six inner ayatanas are the five sense-faculties: the eyes, ear, nose, tongue, the body as a whole, and the sixth is the mental faculty.

The six outer ayatanas are the six objects of the various sense faculties: form, sound, smell, taste, touch and objects of conceptual thinking.

Bardo. (Tib.) The intermediate state between the end of one life and rebirth into another. Bardo can also be divided into six different levels; the bardo of birth, dreams, meditation, the moment before death, the bardo of dharmata and the bardo of becoming.

Bhumi. Level or stage. There are ten bodhisattva levels which begin with the path of seeing in the sutra tradition. The tantric tradition has thirteen levels.

Bodhichitta. (Tib. *chang chup chi sem*) Literally, the mind of enlightenment. There are two kinds of bodhichitta: absolute bodhichitta, which is completely awakened mind that sees the emptiness of phenomena, and relative bodhichitta which is the aspiration to practice the six paramitas and free all beings from the suffering of samsara. In regard to relative bodhichitta, there are also two kinds: aspiration bodhichitta and perseverance bodhichitta.

Bodhisattva. (Tib. *chang chup sem pa*) "Heroic mind." *Bodhi* means blossomed or enlightened, and *sattva* means heroic mind. Literally, one who exhibits the mind of enlightenment. Also an individual who has committed him or herself to the Mahayana path of compassion and the practice of the six paramitas to achieve Buddhahood to free all beings from samsara. These are the heart or mind disciples of the Buddha.

Bodhisattva levels. (Skt. *bhumi,* Tib. *sa*) The levels or stages a bodhisattva goes through to reach enlightenment. These consist of ten levels in the sutra tradition and thirteen in the tantra tradition. The ten are: 1. Overwhelming Joy, 2. Stainless, 3. Radiant, 4. Luminous, 5. Difficult to Practice, 6. Obviously Transcendent , 7. Far Gone, 8. Unshakeable, 9. Excellent Discriminating Wisdom, 10. Cloud of Dharma.

Bodhisattva vow. The vow to attain Buddhahood for the sake of all beings.

Buddha. (Tib. *sang gye*) An individual who attains, or the attainment of, complete enlightenment, such as the historical Shakyamuni Buddha.

Buddha Shakyamuni. (Tib. *shakya tubpa*) The Shakyamuni Buddha, often called the Gautama Buddha, refers to the fourth Buddha of this age, who lived between 563 and 483 BCE.

Buddha-field. (Tib. *sang gye kyi zhing*) 1) One of the realms of the five Buddha families, either as sambhogakaya or nirmanakaya. 2) Pure personal experience.

Buddhahood. (Tib. *sang gyas*) The perfect and complete enlightenment of dwelling in neither samsara nor nirvana. Expression of the realization of perfect enlightenment, which characterizes a Buddha. The attainment of

Buddhahood is the birthright of all beings. According to the teachings of Buddha, every sentient being has, or better is already, Buddha nature; thus Buddhahood cannot be "attained." It is much more a matter of experiencing the primordial perfection and realizing it in everyday life.

Buddha-essence. (Tib. *de shegs nying po*) The essential nature of all sentient beings; the potential for enlightenment.

Cittamatra school. (Tib. *sem tsampa*) A school founded by Asanga in the fourth century, usually translated as the Mind-only school. It is one of the four major schools in the Mahayana tradition (the others being the two Rangtong – Svatantrika and Prasangika – and Shentong) and its main tenet (to greatly simplify) is that all phenomena are mental events.

Clarity. (Tib. *salwa*) Also translated as luminosity. The nature of mind is that it is empty of inherent existence, but the mind is not just voidness or completely empty because it has this clarity which is awareness or the knowing of mind. So clarity is a characteristic of emptiness (*shunyata*) of mind.

Co-emergent wisdom. (Skt. *sahajajnana*, Tib. *lhen chik kye pay yeshe*) The advanced realization of the inseparability of samsara and nirvana and how these arise simultaneously and together.

Cognitive obscurations. There are two types of obscuration that cover one's Buddha nature; the obscuration of the afflictive or disturbing emotions and the obscuration of dualistic perception, sometimes called the intellectual obscurations or cognitive obscurations. The cognitive obscuration is the subtle obscuration of holding on to the concepts of subject, object and action.

Commentary. (Skt. *shastra*, Tib. *tan chö*) The Buddhist teachings are divided into the words of the Buddha (*sutras*) and the commentaries of others on his works (*shastras*).

Common tradition. A way of referring to those teachings held in common by all traditions of Buddhism, which are the teachings on personal liberation of the Hinayana or lesser vehicle.

Common vehicle. The Hinayana.

Conventional truth. (Tib. *kunzop*) There are two truths: relative and absolute or ultimate truth. Relative truth is the perception of an ordinary (unenlightened) being who sees the world with all his or her projections based on the false belief in "I" and "other."

Daka. (Tib. *khandro*) A male counterpart to a dakini.

Dakini. (Tib. *khandroma*) A yogini who has attained high realizations of the fully enlightened mind. She may be a human being who has achieved

such attainments or a non-human manifestation of the enlightened mind of a meditational deity. A female aspect of the protectors. It is feminine energy which has inner, outer and secret meanings.

Definitive meaning. The Buddha's teachings that state the direct meaning of dharma. They are not changed or simplified for the capacity of the listener, in contrast to the provisional meaning.

Desire realm. Comprises the six realms of gods, demi-gods, humans, animals, hungry spirits and hell-beings.

Dharmadhatu. (Tib. *chö ying*) Dharma is "the truth" and dhatu means, "space free from a center." The all-encompassing space, unoriginated and without beginning, out of which all phenomena arises. The Sanskrit means "the essence of phenomena" and the Tibetan means "the expanse of phenomena," but it usually refers to the emptiness that is the essence of phenomena. Dharmadhatu and dharmakaya are essentially the same; they are two indivisible aspects of the same thing. The dharmakaya emphasizes the wisdom aspect while dharmadhatu emphasizes the emptiness aspect.

Dharmakaya. (Tib. *chö ku*) One of the three bodies of Buddhahood. It is enlightenment itself, that is, wisdom beyond any point of reference. (see *kayas, three.)*

Dharmakirti. Famous Buddhist master of the seventh century.

Dharmata. (Tib. *chö nyi*) Dharmata is often translated as "suchness," "the true nature of things" or "things as they are." It is phenomena as it really is or as seen by a completely enlightened being without any distortion or obscuration, so one can say it is "reality." The nature of phenomena and mind.

Dhatu. These are the six sensory objects of sight, sound, smell, taste and body sensation; the six sense faculties: the visual sensory faculty, the auditory sensory faculty, etc., and the six sensory consciousnesses: the visual consciousness, the auditory consciousness, etc. They make up the eighteen constituents of perception.

Disturbing emotions. (Skt. *klesha*, Tib. *nyön mong*) Also called the "afflictive emotions," these are the emotional afflictions or obscurations (in contrast to intellectual obscurations) that disturb the clarity of perception. These are also translated as "poisons." They include any emotion that disturbs or distorts consciousness. The main kleshas are desire, anger and ignorance.

Dzogchen. (Skt. *mahasandhi*) Literally "the great perfection." The teachings beyond the vehicles of causation, first taught in the human world by the great vidyadhara Garab Dorje.

Egolessness. (Tib. *dag me*) Also called selflessness. There are two kinds of

egolessness: the egolessness of other, that is, the emptiness of external phenomena and the egolessness of self, that is, the emptiness of a personal self.

Egolessness or selflessness of person. (Skt. *pudgalanairatmya*) This doctrine asserts that when one examines or looks for the person, one finds that it is empty and without self. The person does not possess a self (Skt. *atman*, Tib. *bdag-nyid*) as an independent or substantial self. This position is held by most Buddhist schools.

Egolessness or selflessness of phenomena. (Skt. *dharma-nairatmya*) This doctrine asserts that not only is there selflessness of the person, but when one examines outer phenomena, one finds that external phenomena are also empty: i.e., they do not have an independent or substantial nature. This position is not held by the Hinayana schools, but is put forth by the Mahayana schools, particularly the Cittamatra school.

Eight consciousnesses. The alaya consciousness (eighth), afflicted consciousness (seventh), mental consciousness (sixth), and the five sense-consciousnesses. The Hinayana sutras generally discuss mind in terms of six consciousnesses, namely, the five sensory consciousnesses and the sixth mental consciousness. The Mahayana Cittamatra (Mind-only) school talks about the eight consciousness in which the first six are the same but the seventh and eighth consciousnesses are added. In the Hinayana tradition the functions of the seventh and eighth consciousnesses are subsumed in the sixth, mental consciousness.

Eight mental constructs or complexities are mental formulations that phenomena have such attributes as arising and ceasing, being singular or plural, coming and going, and being the same or being different.

Eight worldly concerns. (Tib. *jik ten chö gysh*) These keep one from the path; they are attachment to gain, attachment to pleasure, attachment to praise, attachment to fame, aversion to loss, aversion to pain, aversion to blame and aversion to a bad reputation.

Emptiness. (Skt. *shunyata*, Tib. *tong pa nyi*) Sometimes also translated as voidness. The Buddha taught in the second turning of the wheel of dharma that external phenomena and the internal phenomena or concept of self or "I" have no real existence and therefore are "empty."

Enlightenment. (Tib. *jang chub*) The definition varies according to the Buddhist tradition; usually the same as Buddhahood. The Hinayana tradition defines liberation as the freedom from birth in samsara, with mind free of ignorance and emotional conflict. The Mahayana tradition holds that enlightenment is not complete without development of compassion and

commitment to use skilful means to liberate all sentient beings. In the Vajrayana teachings, the foregoing stages of enlightenment are necessary, but ultimate enlightenment is a thorough purification of ego and concepts. The final fruition of complete liberation transcends all duality and conceptualization.

Eternalism. (Tib. *rtag lta*) The belief that there is a permanent and causeless creator of everything; in particular, that one's identity or consciousness has a concrete essence which is independent, everlasting and singular.

Experience and realization. (Tib. *nyam togs*) An expression used for insight and progress on the path. "Experience" refers to temporary meditation experiences and "realization" to unchanging understanding of the nature of things.

Five paths. (Tib. *lam nga*) According to the sutras there are five paths: the path of accumulation, the path of application, the path of seeing/insight (attainment of the first bodhisattva level), the path of meditation and the path of no more learning (Buddhahood). The five paths cover the entire process from beginning dharma practice to complete enlightenment.

Five poisons. (Tib. *ldug nga*) Temporary mental states that inhibit understanding: ignorance, pride, anger, desire and jealousy. The three root poisons are ignorance, desire and anger.

Five wisdoms. The dharmadhatu wisdom, mirror-like wisdom, wisdom of equality, discriminating wisdom and all-accomplishing wisdom. They should not be understood as separate entities but rather as different functions of one's enlightened essence.

Fixation. (Tib. *dzin pa*) The mental act of holding on to a material object, experience, concept or set of philosophical ideas.

Form realm. God realms of subtle form.

Formless realm. (Tib. *zug med kyi kham*) The abode of an unenlightened being who has practiced the four absorptions: infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothing whatsoever, and neither presence nor absence (of conception).

Four extremes. (Tib. *tha shi*) Existence, non-existence, both and neither.

Four foundations of meditation. (Tib. *tun mong gi ngon dro shi*) These are the four thoughts that turn the mind toward dharma. They are reflection on precious human birth, impermanence and the inevitability of death, karma and its effects, and the pervasiveness of suffering in samsara.

Four immeasurables. Love, compassion, emphatic joy and impartiality.

Four Noble Truths. (Tib. *pak pay den pa shi*) The Buddha began teaching with a talk in India at Saranath on the Four Noble Truths. These are the truth

of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering the cessation of suffering, and the path. These truths are the foundation of Buddhism.

Four seals. The four main principles of Buddhism: all compounded phenomena are impermanent, everything defiled (with ego-clinging) is suffering, all phenomena are empty and devoid of a self-entity, and nirvana is perfect peace.

Four Yogas of Mahamudra. (Tib. *phyag chen gyi nal byor zhi*) Four stages in Mahamudra practice: one-pointedness, simplicity, one taste and non-meditation.

Gampopa. (1079-1153 C.E.) One of the main lineage holders of the Kagyu lineage in Tibet. A student of Milarepa, he established the first Kagyu monastic monastery and is known also for writing the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation.*

Graded path. This refers to being guided along the path to enlightenment through the three principle paths, 1) renunciation, 2) enlightened motive of bodhichitta, 3) and a correct understanding of emptiness (wisdom).

Hashang Mahayana. (Tib. *rgya nag gi hva shang*) A Chinese meditation teacher whose view was repudiated by Kamalashila.

Habitual patterns. (Skt. *vasana.* Tib. *bakchak*) Patterns of conditional response that exist as traces or tendencies stored in the alaya-consciousness, the eighth consciousness sometimes called the store-house or all-base consciousness. So called because it is a repository of all karmically conditioned patterns. All dualistic or ego-oriented experiences leave a residue, which is stored in the alaya-consciousness until a later time when some conscious occurrence activates the habitual pattern. The pattern then generates a response in the form of a perception or an action. This response leaves its own karmic residue, stored again in the unconscious repository, and the cycle continues. The explanation of this system is a central teaching of the Cittamatrin tradition of Mahayana Buddhism.

Hearing lineage. (Tib. *nyan gyu*) A lineage of instruction passed orally from teacher to disciple. Teachings of a hearing lineage are usually very secret, since they can only be received by direct, personal communication with the guru. "Hearing lineage" is also a common epithet for the Kagyu lineage.

Heart sutra. (Skt. *Mahaprajnaparamita-hridaya-sutra*) One of the shorter sutras on emptiness.

Higher realms. The three higher realms are birth as a human, demi-god and god.

Hinayana. (Tib. *tek pa chung wa*) Literally, the "lesser vehicle." The first of the

three *yanas*, or vehicles. The term refers to the first teachings of the Buddha, which emphasized the careful examination of mind and its confusion. It is the foundation of Buddha's teachings focusing mainly on the four truths and the twelve interdependent links. The fruit is liberation for oneself.

Idiot compassion. This is the desire to help others but it is not accompanied by sufficient wisdom, so that what one does may not really be beneficial. An example is teaching someone who is hungry to fish, yet the person receives negative karma for killing the fish.

Interdependent origination. The twelve links of causal connections which bind beings to samsaric existence and thus perpetuate suffering: ignorance, karmic formation, consciousness, name and form, the six sense bases, contact, sensation, craving, grasping, becoming, rebirth, old age and death. These twelve links are like an uninterrupted vicious circle, a wheel that spins all sentient beings around and around through the realms of samsara.

Jnana. (Tib. *yeshe*) Enlightened wisdom that is beyond dualistic thought.

Kanjur. The preserved collection of the direct teaching of the Buddha.

Kagyu. (Tib.) *Ka* means oral and *gyu* means lineage; the lineage of oral transmission. One of the four major schools of Buddhism in Tibet. It was founded in Tibet by Marpa and is headed by His Holiness Karmapa. The other three are the Nyingma, the Sakya and the Gelugpa schools.

Kamalashila. An eighth-century scholar in India who was a student of Shantarakshita and is best known for coming to Tibet and with debating and defeating the Chinese scholar Hashang Mahayana at Samye monastery and then writing the *Stages of Meditation*.

Karma. (Tib. *lay*) Literally "action." The unerring law of cause and effect, e.g., positive actions bring happiness and negative actions bring suffering. The actions of each sentient being are the causes that create the conditions for rebirth and the circumstances in that lifetime.

Karma Kagyu. (Tib.) One of the eight schools of the Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism which is headed by His Holiness Karmapa.

Karmapa. The name means Buddha activities. The Karmapas are the head of the Kagyu school of Buddhism and were the first to implement the tradition of incarnate lamas. Karmapas are thought to be an emanation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara.

Karmic latencies or imprints. (Skt. *vasana*, Tib. *bakchak*) Every action that a person does has an imprint which is stored in the eighth consciousness. These latencies express themselves later by leaving the eighth consciousness and entering the sixth consciousness upon being stimulated by external experience.

Klesha. (Tib. *nyön mong*) Also called the "disturbing emotions," these are the

emotional afflictions or obscurations (in contrast to intellectual obscurations) that disturb the clarity of perception. These are also translated as "poisons." They include any emotion that disturbs or distorts consciousness. The three main kleshas are desire, anger and ignorance. The five kleshas are the three above plus pride and envy/jealousy.

Lama. (Skt. *guru*) *La* means nobody above himself or herself in spiritual experience and *ma* means expressing compassion like a mother. Thus the union of wisdom and compassion, feminine and masculine qualities. Lama is also a title given to a practitioner who has completed some extended training.

Liberation. See *enlightenment.*

Lower realm. The three lower realms are birth as a hell being, hungry ghost and animal.

Luminosity. (Tib. *salwa*) In the third turning of the wheel of dharma, the Buddha taught that everything is void, but this voidness is not completely empty because it has luminosity. Luminosity or clarity allows all phenomena to appear and is a characteristic of and inseparable from emptiness (Skt. *shunyata*).

Luminosity. (Tib. *osel*) Literally "free from the darkness of unknowing and endowed with the ability to cognize." The two aspects are "empty luminosity," like a clear open sky; and "manifest luminosity," such as colored light images, and so forth. Luminosity is the uncompounded nature present throughout all of samsara and nirvana.

Madhyamaka. (Tib. *u ma*) The most influential of the four schools of Indian Buddhism founded by Nagarjuna in the second century C.E. The name comes from the Sanskrit word meaning "the Middle-way" meaning that it is the middle way between eternalism and nihilism. The main postulate of this school is that all phenomena – both internal mental events and external physical objects – are empty of any true nature. The school uses extensive rational reasoning to establish the emptiness of phenomena. This school does, however, hold that phenomena do exist on the conventional or relative level of reality.

Mahamudra. (Tib. *cha ja chen po*) Literally means "great seal" or "great symbol," meaning that all phenomena are sealed by the primordially perfect true nature. This form of meditation is traced back to Saraha (tenth century) and was passed down in the Kagyu school through Marpa. This meditative transmission emphasizes perceiving mind directly rather than through rational analysis. It also refers to the experience of the practitioner where one attains the union of emptiness and luminosity and also perceives the

non-duality of the phenomenal world and emptiness; also the name of Kagyupa lineage.

Mahayana. (Tib. *tek pa chen po*) Literally, the "Great Vehicle." These are the teachings of the second turning of the wheel of dharma, which emphasize shunyata (see *shunyata*), compassion and universal Buddha nature. The purpose of enlightenment is to liberate all sentient beings from suffering as well as oneself. Mahayana schools of philosophy appeared several hundred years after the Buddha's death, although the tradition is traced to a teaching he is said to have given at Rajgir, or Vulture Peak Mountain.

Maitreya. The Loving One. The bodhisattva regent of Buddha Shakyamuni, presently residing in the Tushita heaven until becoming the fifth Buddha of this kalpa.

Manjushri. One of the eight bodhisattvas. He is the personification of transcendent knowledge.

Mantra. (Tib. *ngags*) 1) A synonym for Vajrayana. 2) A particular combination of sounds symbolizing the nature of a deity, for example OM MANI PEME HUNG. These are invocations to various meditation deities which are recited in Sanskrit. These Sanskrit syllables, representing various energies, are repeated in different Vajrayana practices.

Mara. (Tib. *du*) Difficulties encountered by the practitioner. The Tibetan word means heavy or thick. In Buddhism mara symbolizes the passions that overwhelm human beings as well as everything that hinders the arising of wholesome roots and progress on the path to enlightenment. There are four kinds: *skandha-mara*, which is incorrect view of self; *klesha-mara*, which is being overpowered by negative emotions; *matyu-mara*, which is death and interrupts spiritual practice; and *devaputra-mara*, which is becoming stuck in the bliss that comes from meditation.

Mental consciousness. (Tib. *yid kyi namshe*) The sixth consciousness is the faculty of thinking which produces thoughts based upon the experiences of the five sense-consciousnesses or its own previous content. (see *eight consciousnesses*).

Mental factors. (Tib. *sem yung*) Mental factors are contrasted to mind in that they are more long-term propensities of mind including eleven virtuous factors such as faith, detachment and equanimity; the six root defilements such as desire, anger and pride; the twenty secondary defilements such as resentment, dishonesty and harmfulness.

Middle-way. (Tib. *u ma*) or Madhyamaka school. A philosophical school founded by Nagarjuna and based on the Prajnaparamita sutras of emptiness.

Mind-only school. Also called Cittamatra school. This is one of the major schools

in the Mahayana tradition founded in the fourth century by Asanga that emphasized everything is mental events.

Mipham Rinpoche. (Tib.) Great Nyingma master and writer of the nineteenth century.

Nagarjuna. (Tib. *ludrup)* An Indian master of philosophy. Founder of the Madhyamaka school and author of the *Mula-prajna* and other important works. (second - third century)

Nalanda. The greatest Buddhist University from the fifth to the tenth century located near modern Rajgir, which was the seat of the Mahayana teachings; many great Buddhist scholars who studied there.

Nihilism. (Tib. *chad lta*) Literally, "the view of discontinuance." The extreme view of nothingness: no rebirth or karmic effects, and the non-existence of a mind after death.

Nirmanakaya. (Tib. *tulku*) There are three bodies of the Buddha; the nirmanakaya or "emanation body" manifests in the world and in this context manifests as the Shakyamuni Buddha. (see *kayas, three.)*

Nirvana. (Tib. *nyangde)* Literally, "extinguished." Individuals live in samsara and with spiritual practice can attain a state of enlightenment in which all false ideas and conflicting emotions have been extinguished. This is called nirvana. The nirvana of a Hinayana practitioner is freedom from cyclic existence as an arhat. The nirvana of a Mahayana practitioner is Buddhahood, free from extremes of dwelling in either samsara or the perfect peace of an arhat.

Non-distraction. (Tib. *yengs med*) Not straying from the continuity of the practice.

Non-fabrication. (Tib. *zo med*) The important key point in meditation of Mahamudra and Dzogchen; that innate wakefulness is not created through intellectual effort.

Non-meditation. (Tib. *gom med*) The state of not holding on to an object meditated upon nor a subject who meditates. Also refers to the fourth stage of Mahamudra in which nothing further needs to be meditated upon or cultivated.

Non-thought. (Tib. *mi tog*) A state in which conceptual thinking is absent.

Obscurations. There are two categories of obscuration or defilement that cover one's Buddha nature: the defilement of disturbing emotions (see *five poisons* and *disturbing emotions*); and the defilement of latent tendencies sometimes called the obscuration of dualistic perception, or the intellectual/cognitive obscurations (see *cognitive obscurations*). The first category prevents sentient beings from freeing themselves from samsara,

while the second prevents them from gaining accurate knowledge and realizing truth.

Oral instructions. (Tib. *man ngag, dams ngag*) As opposed to the scholastic traditions, the oral instructions of the Practice lineages are concise and pithy so they can always be kept in mind; they are practical and to the point so they are effective means to deal directly with the practice.

Padmasambhava. (Tib. *Guru Rinpoche*) Or the "Lotus Born." The great eighth century Indian mahasiddha who came to Tibet taming all the negative elemental forces and spreading the Buddhadharma. In particular he taught many tantras and Vajrayana practices, and concealed many texts to be later revealed by his disciples.

Pandita. A great scholar.

Path of Liberation. The path of Mahamudra practice.

Path of Means. Refers to the Six Yogas of Naropa as well as to the stages of creation and completion with attributes.

Partial compassion. The desire to feel sorry for and want to help others, but only if they are of a certain gender, race, ethnic group, social status, etc.

Paranirvana. After the Buddha Shakyamuni passed from this realm: Buddhas are not said to have died, since they have reached the stage of deathlessness, or deathless awareness.

Pointing-out instructions. (Tib. *ngo sprod kyi gdampa*) The direct introduction to the nature of mind.

Prajna. (Tib. *she rab*) In Sanskrit it means "perfect knowledge" and can mean wisdom, understanding or discrimination. Usually it means the wisdom of seeing things from a high (i.e., non-dualistic) point of view.

Prajnaparamita. (Tib. *she rab chi parol tu chinpa)* Transcendent perfect knowledge. The Tibetan literally means, "gone to the other side" or "gone beyond" as expressed in the Prajnaparamita mantra, "Om gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha." The realization of emptiness in the *Prajnaparamita Hridaya* or *Heart Sutra,* made possible by the extraordinarily profound dharma of the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha in the world and the practices that came from it, such as the Vajrayana tantras, which make use of visualization and the control of subtle physical energies.

Prajnaparamita sutras. Used to refer to a collection of about 40 Mahayana sutras that all deal with the realization of prajna.

Prasangika school, or Consequence School. The Rangtong middle way has two main schools, the Svatantrika and the Prasangika. The tradition comes down from Buddhapalita (his commentary on Nagarjuna) and then

Chandrakirti, and is the tradition of not asserting anything about the nature of genuine reality, because reality is beyond conceptual fabrication.

Pratyekabuddha. "Solitary Awakened One." These are the body disciples of the Buddha. One who has attained awakening for himself, and on his own, with no teacher in that life. Generally placed on a level between arhat and Buddha. It is the fruition of the second level of the Hinayana path through contemplation on the twelve interdependent links in reverse order.

Provisional teachings. The teachings of the Buddha which have been simplified or modified to the capabilities of the audience. This contrasts with the definitive meaning.

Pure realm. (Tib. *dag zhing*) Realms created by Buddhas which are totally free from suffering and dharma there can be received directly. These realms are presided over by various Buddhas such as Amitabha, Avalokiteshvara, and Maitreya who presides over Tushita.

Rangtong school. The Madhyamaka or Middle-way is divided into two major schools; Rangtong (empty of self) and Shentong (empty of other). Rangtong is from the second turning of the wheel of dharma and teaches that reality is empty of self and beyond concepts.

Rebirth. Continuous, cyclic rebirth into the realm of samsara. Consciousness of an individual enters form according to his or her karma, the causes and conditions created by previous actions.

Recognition. (Tib. *ngo shes, ngo phrod*) In this context it means "recognizing the nature of mind."

Rinpoche. Literally, "very precious," used as a term of respect for a Tibetan guru.

Rupakaya. (Tib. *zuk kyi ku*) The form bodies which encompass the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya.

Salwa. Tibetan for luminosity. In the Vajrayana everything is void, but this voidness is not completely empty because it has luminosity. Luminosity or clarity allows all phenomena to appear and is a characteristic of emptiness (shunyata).

Samadhi. (Tib. *tin ne zin*) A state of meditation that is non-dualistic. There is an absence of discrimination between self and other. Also called meditative absorption or one-pointed meditation, this is the highest form of meditation.

Sambhogakaya. (Tib. *long chö dzok ku*) There are three bodies of the Buddha, the sambhogakaya, also called the "enjoyment body," is a realm of the dharmakaya that only manifests to bodhisattvas (see *kayas, three*).

Samsara. (Tib. *kor wa*) "Cyclic existence." The conditioned existence of ordinary life in which suffering occurs because one still possesses attachment, aggression and ignorance. It is contrasted to nirvana. Through the force of karma motivated by ignorance, desire and anger one is forced to take on the impure aggregates and circle the wheel of existence until liberation.

Sangha. (Tib. *gen dun*) "Virtuous One." *Sang* means intention or motivation and *gha* means virtuous. One with virtuous motivation. One of the three jewels. Generally refers to the followers of Buddhism, and more specifically to the community of monks and nuns. The exalted sangha are those who have attained a certain level of realization of the Buddha's teachings.

Sautrantika school or Sutra school. One of the four major schools of Indian Buddhism and one of the two main Hinayana schools. This school has further sub-schools, but basically its view is that relative truth refers to what has only general characteristics: e.g., the objects of our thoughts such as when we think fire (this appears as a concept to our mind and not the five senses); and ultimate truth is that which has specific characteristics and can perform a function such as a specific instance of fire which appears to the senses and can actually burn. In terms of general perception we mix these two together.

Secret mantra. (Tib. *sang ngak*) A name for the Vajrayana.

Selflessness. (Tib. *dag me*) Also called egolessness. In two of the Hinayana schools (Vaibhashika and Sautrantika) this referred exclusively to the fact that "a person" is not a real permanent self, but rather just a collection of thoughts and feelings. In two of the Mahayana schools (Cittamatra and Madhyamaka) this was extended to mean there was no inherent existence to outside phenomena as well.

Sentient beings. With consciousness; an animated being as opposed to an inanimate object. All beings with consciousness or mind who have not attained the liberation of Buddhahood. This includes those individuals caught in the sufferings of samsara as well as those who have attained the levels of a bodhisattva.

Seven limbs of awakening. The virtues of faith, insight, samadhi, joy, diligence, mindfulness and equanimity. Externally they are represented by the seven articles of royalty.

Shamatha. (Tib.) See tranquility meditation.

Shamatha with support. (Tib. *shinay ten cas*) The practice of calming the mind while using an object of concentration, material or mental, or simply the breath.

Shamatha without support. (Tib. *shinay ten med*) The act of calming the mind

without any particular object, resting non-distractedly. This practice serves as a prelude for Mahamudra and should not be mistaken for the ultimate result.

Shastra. (Tib. *tan chö*) The Buddhist teachings are divided into words of the Buddha (the *sutras*) and the commentaries of others on his works, the shastras.

Shentong school. The Madhyamaka or Middle-way is divided into two major schools, Rangtong (empty of self) and Shentong (empty of other). Shentong is from the third turning of the wheel of dharma and explains that ultimate reality is emptiness and luminosity inseparable.

Shravaka. "Hearer"; corresponds to the level of arhat, those that seek and attain liberation for themselves through listening to the Buddha's teaching and gaining insight into selflessness and the four truths. These are the Buddha's speech disciples.

Shunyata. See *emptiness.*

Siddha. (Tib. *drup top)* An accomplished Buddhist practitioner.

Siddhi. (Tib. *ngodrup*) "Accomplishment." The spiritual accomplishments of accomplished practitioners. Usually refers to the "supreme siddhi" of complete enlightenment, but can also mean the "common siddhis," eight mundane accomplishments.

Simplicity. (Tib. *spros ral*) 1) The absence of creating mental constructs or conceptual formations about the nature of things. 2) The second stage in the practice of Mahamudra.

Six consciousnesses. The five sensory consciousnesses and the mental consciousness.

Six realms. (Tib. *rikdruk*) The realms of the six classes of beings: gods, demigods, humans, animals, hungry ghosts and hell beings. These are the possible types of rebirths for beings in samsara and are: the god realm in which gods have great pride, the jealous god realm in which the jealous gods try to maintain what they have, the human realm which is the best realm because one has the possibility of achieving enlightenment, the animal realm characterized by stupidity, the hungry ghost realm characterized by great craving, and the hell realm characterized by aggression.

Skandha. (Tib. *pung pa*) Literally "heaps." The five aspects which comprise the physical and mental constituents of a sentient being: physical form, sensations, conceptions, formations and consciousness. These can also be seen from the perspective of the five basic transformations that perceptions undergo when an object is perceived. First is form, which includes all sounds, smells, etc., everything that is not thought. The second

and third are sensations (pleasant and unpleasant, etc.) and their identification. Fourth are mental events, which actually include the second and third aggregates. The fifth is ordinary consciousness, such as the sensory and mental consciousnesses.

Skilful means. (Skt. *upaya,* Tib. *thab*) On the Mahayana level, this is one of the ten paramitas and refers to dedicating the merits of all one's deeds to the benefit of all sentient beings. On the Vajrayana level, it refers to practices of the internal yogas, which manipulate the internal energies and channels.

Stupa. (Tib. *chorten*) Objects of offering, or objects for accumulating. A stupa is a monument symbolic of the dharmakaya and contains the relics of Buddhas or other enlightened beings. These, like the Guru, are focal points for veneration and the path to Buddhahood. Any disrespectful act toward them is disrespect for enlightenment itself.

Sugata. An epithet for the Buddha.

Sugatagarbha. The Buddha nature.

Supreme siddhi. Another word for enlightenment.

Sutra. (Tib. *do*) Sometimes "sutra" is used to cover all of the teachings given by the Buddha himself. At other times it is used more precisely to mean one of the three sections of the dharma called the Tripitaka or Three Baskets. In the Tripitaka there are the Sutras, the Vinaya and the Abhidharma. The sutras are mainly concerned with meditation or samadhi; the Abhidharma is mainly concerned with the development of wisdom and understanding; and the Vinaya is mainly concerned with discipline and the rules of morality and conduct. In the narrow sense sutra means one of these three sections of the Buddha's teachings, and in its broad sense it means all of the teachings given by the Buddha.

Sutra Mahamudra. (Tib. *mdo'i phyag chen*) The Mahamudra system based on the Prajnaparamita scriptures and emphasizing Shamatha, Vipashyana and the progressive journey through the five paths and ten bhumis.

Sutrayana. The sutra approach to achieving enlightenment, which includes the Hinayana and the Mahayana.

Svatantrika or *Autonomy School.* The reason this school is called the autonomy school is that they assert the autonomous existence of valid reasons that prove their point. The Rangtong middle way has two main schools, the Svatantrika and the Prasangika. The Svatantrika has two main sub-schools which both assert conventional reality to be like illusions, but do so according to either the sutra school or the Mind-only school. Ultimate reality, it asserts, is emptiness and free from conceptual fabrication.

Svabhavakakaya. (Tib. *ngo bo nyid kyi sku*) The "essence body." Sometimes counted as the fourth kaya, the unity of the first three.

Tantra. (Tib. *gyu*.) Literally, tantra means "continuity," and in Buddhism it refers to two specific things: the texts (resultant texts, or those that take the result as the path) that describe the practices leading from ignorance to enlightenment, including commentaries by tantric masters; and the way to enlightenment itself, encompassing the ground, path and fruition. One can divide Buddhism into the sutra tradition and the tantra tradition. The sutra tradition primarily involves the academic study of the Mahayana sutras and the tantric path primarily involves practicing the Vajrayana practices. The tantras are primarily the texts of the Vajrayana practices.

Tantra Mahamudra. (Tib. *sngags kyi phyag chen*) The same as mantra Mahamudra. The Mahamudra practice connected to the Six Yogas of Naropa.

Tathagatagarbha. The same as Buddha-nature. The inherently present potential for enlightenment in all sentient beings.

Ten directions. These are the four cardinal directions, their mid-directions (i.e. NE, SE, etc.) plus up and down. Basically it means "everywhere."

Ten non-virtuous actions. Killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slander, abusive words, idle gossip, covetousness, ill-will and wrong views. Acts are non-virtuous or unwholesome when they result in undesirable karmic effects. Thus, this list of ten unwholesome acts occurs generally in discussions of the functioning of karma. The first three are actions of body, the next four of speech, and the last three of mind. The ten virtuous actions are the opposites of the above ten non-virtuous actions.

Ten stages. The stages or bodhisattva levels in the Mahayana path which are: 1) The Joyous One with an emphasis on generosity, 2) The Stainless One with an emphasis on discipline, 3) The Illuminating One with an emphasis on patience, 4) The Flaming One with an emphasis on exertion, 5) The One Difficult to Conquer with an emphasis on samadhi, 6) The Manifest One with an emphasis on wisdom, 7) The Far Going One with an emphasis on skilful activity, 8) The Unshakeable One with an emphasis on future, 9) The One of Good Discrimination with an emphasis on efficacy, 10) Cloud of Dharma with an emphasis on accomplishing enlightenment. In the tantric (Vajrayana) literature there are three more stages of manifesting enlightenment, making thirteen in total.

Tenjur. Commentary on the Kanjur; also tantras of meditation, healing, scientific and technical instructions, etc.

Terton. (Tib.) A master in the Tibetan tradition who discovers treasures (*terma*) which are teachings concealed by great masters of the past.

Terma. Literally, hidden treasure. Works which were hidden by great bodhisattvas and later rediscovered. They may be actual physical texts or they may come from "the sky" as transmissions from the sambhogakaya.

Theravada. (Tib. *neten depa*) A school, sometimes called the Hinayana, which is the foundation of Buddhism and which emphasizes the careful examination of mind and its confusion.

Three jewels. (Tib. *kön chok sum*) Literally "three precious ones." The three essential components of Buddhism: Buddha, dharma, sangha: i.e., the Awakened One, the truth expounded by him, and the followers living in accordance with this truth. Firm faith in the three precious ones is the stage of "stream entry." The three precious ones are objects of veneration and are considered "places of refuge." Buddhist takes refuge by pronouncing the threefold refuge formula, thus acknowledging formally that they are Buddhists.

Three kayas. Dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. Fully enlightened beings, Buddhas, and their manifestations are often understood by way of the three kayas: The dharmakaya is enlightenment itself, wisdom beyond any reference point which can only be perceived by other enlightened beings; The sambhogakaya, often called the enjoyment body, manifests in the pure lands which can only be seen by advanced bodhisattvas; and the nirmanakaya, which can be seen by ordinary beings as in the case of the historical Buddha: but this can also be any type of being or relative appearance to assist ordinary beings.

The three natures or three aspects of experience are: the imaginary nature (Skt. *parikalita,* Tib. *kun rtag*), the dependent nature (Skt. *paratantra,* Tib. *gzhan dbang*) and the truly existent nature (Skt. *parinispanna,* Tib. *yongs grub*).

Three realms. These are three categories of samsara. The desire realm includes existences where beings are reborn with solid bodies due to their karma, ranging from the deva paradises to the hell realms. The form realm is where beings are reborn due to the power of meditation, and their bodies are of subtle form in this realm. These are the meditation paradises. The formless realm is where beings due to their meditation (samadhi) have entered a state of meditation after death and the processes of thought and perception have ceased.

Three sufferings. These are the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change, and pervasive suffering (meaning the inherent suffering in all of samsara).

Three vehicles. Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana.

Three Wheels of Dharma. (Skt. *dharmachakra*) The Buddha's teachings

correspond to three levels, which very briefly are as follows. The first turning was the teachings on the Four Noble Truths and the teaching of the egolessness of person; the second turning was the teachings on emptiness and the emptiness of phenomena; the third turning was the teachings on luminosity and Buddha-nature.

Tonglen. Giving and taking. A bodhichitta practice of giving one's virtue and happiness to others and taking their suffering and misdeeds upon oneself.

Tranquility meditation. (Tib. *Shinay*, Skt. *Shamatha*) One of the two main types of meditation, calm abiding, the meditative practice of calming the mind in order to rest free from the disturbance of thought activity; the other is insight or Vipashyana.

Tripitaka. The three collections of teachings, Vinaya, Sutra and Abhidharma.

Tushita paradise. (Tib. *gan dan*) This is one of the heaven fields of the Buddha. Tushita is in the sambhogakaya and therefore is not located in any place or time.

Two accumulations. (Tib. *shogs nyis*) The accumulation of merit with concepts and the accumulation of wisdom beyond concepts.

Two obscurations. There are two categories of obscurations or defilements that cover one's Buddha nature: the defilement of conflicting emotions (see *five poisons*) and the defilement of latent tendencies, sometimes called the obscuration of dualistic perception, or the intellectual/cognitive obscurations (see *cognitive obscurations*). The first category prevents sentient beings from freeing themselves from samsara, while the second prevents them from gaining accurate knowledge and realizing truth.

Two truths. Relative truth and ultimate truth. Relative truth describes the superficial and apparent mode of all things. Ultimate truth describes the true and unmistaken mode of all things. These two are described differently in the different schools, each leading progressively deeper and closer to the way things are.

Ultimate truth. (Tib. *dondam*) There are two truths or views of reality: relative truth, which is seeing things as ordinary beings do with the dualism of "I" and "other," and ultimate truth, which transcends duality and sees things as they are.

Vaibhashika school. One of the four major schools of Indian Buddhism and one of the two major Hinayana schools. Sometimes translated as the Particularist school, it defines relative truth as whatever can be broken down into parts and ultimate truth as that which cannot be broken down, e.g., indivisible atoms and moments of consciousness.

Vajrayana. (Tib. *dorje tek pa*) Literally, "diamond-like" or "indestructible

capacity." *Vajra* here refers to method, so the method yana. There are three major traditions of Buddhis (Hinayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana). The Vajrayana is based on the tantras and emphasizes the clarity aspect of phenomena. A practitioner of the method of taking the result as the path.

Vasubandhu. (4th Century C.E.) A great fourth-century Indian scholar who was brother of Asanga and wrote the Hinayana work the *Abhidharmakosha* explaining the Abhidharma.

View, meditation and action. (Tib. *ta ba gom pa yodpa*) The philosophical orientation, the act of growing accustomed to that – usually in sitting practice – and the implementation of that insight during the activities of daily life. Each of the three vehicles has its particular definition of view, meditation and action.

Vinaya. One of the three major sections of the Buddha's teachings showing ethics, what to avoid and what to adopt. The other two sections are the sutras and the Abhidharma.

Vipashyana meditation. (Tib. *lhak tong*) Sanskrit for "insight meditation." This meditation develops insight into the nature of reality (Skt. *dharmata*). One of the two main aspects of meditation practice, the other being Shamatha.

Yana. Means capacity. There are three yanas, narrow, (Hinayana) great (Mahayana) and indestructible (Vajrayana).

THE FIVE WORKS OF MAITREYA

1. *The Changeless Nature* (Skt. *Uttaratantrashastra*, Tib. *rgyud bla ma*). This work is written in verse and has seven vajra points. It is mainly a commentary on the Three Jewels, the seed of Buddha-essence which is inherent in all sentient beings, and the attributes and activities of the Buddha. It particularly deals with the subject of Buddha-essence and the development of the realization of the nature of phenomena through the purification of the disturbing emotions.
2. *The Ornament of Clear Realization* (Skt. *Abhisamayalankara*, Tib. *mngon rtogs rgyan*). This work is a verse commentary on the Prajnaparamita literature (which comes in the 100,000, 25,000 and in 8,000 verses etc.) and like that literature is divided into eight vajra topics. This text is studied in all four Tibetan lineages and is used in the study of the sutra system.
3. *Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes* (Skt. *Madhyantavibhaga*, Tib. *dbus mtha' rnam 'byed*). This work is a commentary expounding primarily the Cittamatra school of Buddhism and especially the Shentong school. The text explores eternalism and nihilism and why these are not part of the Middle-way.
4. *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata* (Skt. *Dharmadharmatavibhaga*, Tib. *chos dang chos nyid rnam 'byed*). This is a commentary on the tathagatagarbha doctrine and the Cittamatra and Madhyamaka schools of thought.
5. *The Ornament of Mahayana Sutras* (Skt. *Mahayanasutralankara*, Tib. *theg pa chen po mdo sde rgyan*). This work consists of twenty-one chapters and is written in verse. It covers a discussion of Buddha-essence, refuge in the Three Jewels, the Mahayana paths, and the doctrine of emptiness.

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Care of Dharma Books

Dharma books contain the teachings of the Buddha. They have the power to protect against lower rebirth and to point the way to liberation. Therefore, they should be treated with respect.

These considerations may be also kept in mind for Dharma artwork, as well as the written teachings and artwork of other religions.